■ LIFESTYLE/C1
The dawn of a new woman

■ SPORTS/A21
Kobe lifts Lakers past Suns for 3-1 lead in series

■ METRO/A17
Exit being built near Alabang viaduct in preparation for SLEx rehabilitation

■ WORLD/A20
Nepal leaders curb king's powers

Workers of the world push for better lives

WORKERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD ACROSS ASIA and Europe to press for better conditions—from improving safety in notoriously dangerous factories to boosting wages—often encountering a heavy police presence and, in some places, outright resistance.

In Sri Lanka, where violence between Tamil Tiger rebels and the military has heightened fears of a return to civil war, the government canceled

WORKERS A3

e-mail: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, May 2, 2006 ■■ Vol. 21 / No. 143 website: www.inq7.net

20 PLDT unionists give cops the slip

By Marguax C. Ortiz, Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Alexis Pepa

PURSUITS THE YELLOW shirts made them invisible.

Some 20 members of the workers' union of the country's biggest telephone

20 PLDT A3

Mendiola: A bridge too far

Blocked by riot policemen, protesters claim victory in Recto rally

STANDOFF: Thousands of Labor Day marchers demanding President Macapagal-Arroyo's ouster confront a thick wall of riot policemen on Claro M. Recto Avenue, on their way to the Don Chino Roces (formerly Mendiola) Bridge near Malacañang.

By Christian V. Esguerra, Marguax C. Ortiz, Jerome Aning and Blanche S. Rivera

IT WAS WITHIN REACH BUT not quite within grasp.

In sweltering 36-degree Centigrade heat, thousands of militant workers yesterday tried to march to historic Mendiola (Don Chino Roces) Bridge to dramatize their demands for a P125 wage increase and the removal of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

But they ran into walls of riot troops at almost every turn and had to settle for a noisy rally on Claro M. Recto Avenue and Nicanor Reyes (formerly Morayta) Street, about 200 to 300 meters short of their target.

"This is an important victory. Even if we didn't reach Mendiola, we at least reclaimed Recto," Leody de Guzman, secretary general of the Pakiisa ng Manggagawang Pilipino, told the hotspot.

"That, to us, is very meaningful and it was brought about by the workers' numbers and determination. We'll just double our numbers next time."

Media estimates put the number of the marchers at 5,000 to 7,000, against a police count of 3,000, and the organizers' grand es

MENDIOLA A4

Workers demand wage hike nationwide

By the PDI Bureau

THOUSANDS OF WORKERS across the country marched on Labor Day to demand wage increases in rallies that were generally peaceful.

The loudest cheers were heard in Tarlac City where Mayor Jocelyn Duavit announced that he had allotted P10 million as a bonus for City Hall workers.

"I understand your situation, especially during these times. I urge the Congress to grant the workers' salary demand for a wage and salary increase," said Duavit at the rally attended by 1,000 workers at Rizal Park across from City Hall.

In Baguio City, about 100 workers found their ranks "brandished" by self-proclaimed teenage "anarchists" whose May 1 message contradicted the crusade that union workers had been awaiting for centuries.

The spike-haired teenagers' cause was "antiwork." They argued that militant workers should fight to "free themselves from slave labor to win genuine freedom from capitalism."

One worker reacted angrily to the teenagers, saying: "All forms of work are dignified, but we are fighting for higher wages to guarantee that this dignity of work continues. These children know nothing about real work."

The youths were members of an underground punk music movement that had been promoting the Feb. 14 arrest of 11 teenagers who were linked to an alleged communist rebel raid on a military detachment in Benguet.

They carried placards that said: "Tired of your work? Go anywork."

WORKERS A4

MEMBERS of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty raise their fists after laying wreaths at the foot of the Don Chino Roces Monument.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo listens to Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas during a Labor Day program at Heroes Hall in Malacañang.

Cops, Army troops arrest 20 militants

By Luige A. del Puerto and Michael Lim Ubac

AT LEAST 20 MILITANT LEADERS AND WORKers were arrested in an apparent preemptive police sentence to workers the Labor Day protests.

Rep. Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna said 14 peasant leaders preparing to join a caravan to Manila were arrested in Candelaria, Quezon, yesterday.

"We know these people. They are not members of the New People's Army," said Ocampo, who talked to reporters at the House of Representatives where he has taken refuge since he was charged with rebellion in February.

On Friday four members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) were arrested in Batangas Sunday in Tagaytay City while driving to Manila, ostensibly to join yesterday's rallies.

The Philippine National Police identified the four as Arley Sarmiento, Marvin Gelang, Joel Alejandro Pinpin and Riel Custodio and said they were NPA guerrillas. Sarmiento was described as an NPA provincial secretary in Cavite.

The Philippine Army said its unit in Rosario, Leyte, had captured the arrests of Thelma

COPS A13

GMA unveils ₱40-B package of benefits for workers

By Christine O. Avendaño

AS MILITANT GROUPS MARCHED to the streets on a sweltering Labor Day, President Macapagal-Arroyo hosted a luncheon for moderate trade union leaders in Malacañang, where she announced a P40-billion package of benefits for workers, including a pay raise for government employees starting next year.

Aimed at mitigating the effects of high prices on workers' incomes, the package of benefits unveiled by the President included the reimbursement of P12 billion in penalties and surcharges slapped by the Social Security System (SSS) and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) on about 10 million members who had been unable to repay their housing and salary loans.

"Our gains in the economy mark payback time for the people," Ms Arroyo told the labor groups led by the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and the Federation of Free Workers. Business leaders also attended the Palace luncheon.

In her speech, the President appealed to workers in the private sector to seek a "reasonable" wage increase when the issue comes up for deliberations in the regional wage boards. The boards are made up of representa

GMA A4

30,000 jobs offered at Labor Day 'mega fair' in QC

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and DJ Yap

AS THOUSANDS OF WORKERS loudly staged Labor Day demonstrations, an equal number of people quietly filed their resumés at a government-sponsored job fair, hoping for a chance to land a decent job.

Job hunters—from fresh graduates to overseas workers and retrenched wage-earners—trooped to the Quezon City Hall Rizal Garden for the Department of Labor and Employment-sponsored "mega job fair."

Clutching their employment documents, the jobseekers submitted their applications at booths set up by recruitment and placement agencies representing local firms as well as overseas companies.

At least 108 local companies and 50 foreign recruitment agencies participated in the fair, a joint project of the DOLE, the Quezon City government, the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and other agencies.

It offered at least 30,000 jobs, most of which were service-oriented and required highly or semiskilled workers, according to Labor Undersecretary Danny Cruz.

Of the local jobs, most were in call centers, hotels and restau-

30,000 JOBS A4

WEATHER FORECAST

THE EYE (center) of tropical depression Caloy is expected to move slowly over the northern Philippine Sea today, bringing cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms in Batanes, Babuyan Islands and northern Visayas. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mainly in the afternoon or evening.

Metro Manila: Partly cloudy; Baguio: Partly cloudy; Tuguegarao: Partly cloudy; Laoag: Partly cloudy; Dagupan: Partly cloudy; Clark Field: Partly cloudy; Legaspi: Cloudy with rains; Catbalogan: Cloudy with rains; Kalibo/Roxas: Cloudy with rains; Iloilo: Cloudy with rains; Dumaguete: Cloudy with rains; Zamboanga: Cloudy with rains; Cagayan de Oro: Cloudy with rains; Davao: Cloudy with rains

Second FRONTPAGE

FVR lifts Cha-cha deadline, urges AFP rebels to 'rest'

By Cynthia G. Rubeza

EX-PRESIDENT on current President: it's still wasting and wasting.

FORMER PRESIDENT FIDEL Ramos said yesterday he was giving up his June 2006 deadline for Charter change but was still confident that a parliamentary form of government would be in place by May 2007.

Ramos acknowledged at a news conference prior to departing on a three-week visit to the United States that the original timetable he had set for constitutional amendments and the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo were now beyond his control.

"My timetable was June 2006 but it was delayed or derailed by the impeachment and the creation of the Constitutive Commission on Charter Change," Ramos said. "But I'm still hopeful for a change so parliamentary system becomes. I've been espousing that transformation since 2000."

Ramos based his optimism on the ongoing "people's initiative" and Speaker Jose de Venecia's efforts to amend the Constitution.

Asked to comment on former President Gloria Arroyo's active role in the 1986 Cha-cha movement, Ramos replied, "That's not new... I'm sure that Gloria continued by people of petitions. Let's credit them for their intention but it's not for me to say whether they will succeed or not."

Reminded that Aquino and the late Cardinal Jaime Sin had succeeded in arresting Charter change during his presidency, Ramos said that the situation then was different.

"As far as I'm concerned, it had nothing to do with the lifting of term limits of public officials and a second term for the president," he said.

While Ramos favored a change in the parliamentary system, he vigorously opposed the no-election scenario of the Arroyo administration as well as the lifting of term limits of local officials in pushing for Charter change.

Asked about his support for the President, Ramos replied, "It's still wasting and wasting, and it has not changed."

Ramos also urged elements in the military who may be planning to destabilize the administration to "stop."

Ramos said he believed that the military organization per se was not senior but only a small fraction of it.

Ramos said close rebels in the United States, he would meet with business groups, diaspora and members of the Filipino communities in San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles in California, in Atlanta, Georgia; in Washington DC and New York City.

SC to rule on GMA emergency decree

By Armando N. Nazar

COMBAT-READY presidential guards sit near a truck of container vans used to fortify Malacañang Monday. The May 1 Labor Day rallies near the Presidential Palace ended peacefully.

THE SUPREME COURT is set to deliberate today on Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, the decree by which President Macapagal-Arroyo placed the country under a state of national emergency in February, and is expected to come out with a decision at least before its break on May 8.

In an interview with reporters, Supreme Court spokesperson Ismael Khan Jr. did not discount the possibility the ruling could come out today.

"Definitely, the Supreme Court justices will tackle it [today]. We are hoping they can also rule on it," Khan said.

But, certainly, the high tribunal would come out with its ruling before the 15 justices go on a "decision-writing break" from May 8 to June 2, he said.

In oral arguments on PP 1017, the petitioners seeking to declare the order unconstitutional claimed that what the proclamation did last any and how the military and police interpreted it were what made it dangerous.

Lawyers led by Rene Saguisag and former DFA law dean Raul Pangalangan said it was the "vagueness" of the proclamation that made it subject to vast interpretation, which could result in the commission of basic liberties.

"It is void for its vagueness," said Saguisag, lawyer for one of the petitioners, Inquirer Columnist-Opinion publisher and editor in chief of The Daily Tribune who had asked that the proclamation be nullified.

Saguisag asked the court not to consider the matter moot but to give a "clear-cut ruling" in order to warn the government against violating the people's rights.

"We cannot allow anybody to experiment without liberties," he said, citing the raid on the Tribune by police following the issuance of PP 1017 on Feb. 24.

"This is really meant to be a warning against bigger media [outfits like] MBS-[200] and the Inquirer. They were testing the waters," Saguisag said, in reply to a question on why the Tribune, with its limited circulation, was raided.

The ruling on PP 1017 will mean on the heels of the high court's decision last month enumerating rare other controversial presidential decrees—Executive Order No. 464 and the calibrated preemptive response (CPR) policy.

EO 464 required all government officials and public officials to first congressional inquiries before allowed to attend by the President, while the CPR policy ordered the strict implementation of Batas Pambansa Blg. 880, particularly on the conduct of protest rallies.

Gov't sees P26-B bonanza from VAT

By Philip C. Tubeza

DESPITE OIL PRICES AND EXPECTED tax collections, the government could expect a P26 billion windfall from the expanded value-added tax (VAT) this year, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. has told Congress.

This is over and above the P75.79 billion the government had expected to collect from VAT this year, Andaya said.

Because of this, Andaya, in a report to the House committee on appropriations and the Department of Budget and Management, proposed a "split bill" of expenditures totaling P66.3 billion.

"The principle is to plow back windfall revenues from higher oil prices into high impact projects to inflict any collision that the government is the first to benefit from expensive fuel," he said.

VAT collections from oil products were expected to increase due to the increase in the world oil prices. Crude oil reached a high of $75.31 per barrel in global markets last week.

A majority of congressmen had called for the temporary lifting of the 12 percent VAT on oil to mitigate the impact of rising oil prices but Malacañang dismissed the idea.

Andaya said that of the projected P75.79-billion VAT collection for 2006, P22.7 billion had been earmarked for "public projects and programs" to pump prime the economy and improve social services.

The P22.7 billion is 30 percent of the projected VAT collection. The rest—P52.13 billion or 70 percent of total collections—would go toward reducing the budget deficit, he said.

Andaya said a summary of "expenditure items chargeable against VAT" showed that P26 billion untilled from the expanded value-added tax (VAT) this year, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. has told Congress.

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Andaya said a summary of "expenditure items chargeable against VAT" showed that "economic services" would get the biggest slice of the pie with P18.4 billion.

Next in the social investment menu with an allocation of P8.2 billion to be shared by the Philippine National Police, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and the Department of National Defense, among other agencies, he said.

Under "social safety nets," Andaya said, the government released P1 billion to the PNP to buy patrol cars—"VAT enabler" he dubbed them—and hire 3,000 new policemen.

Andaya said most of the projects were in the nature of "capital outlays" or infrastructure.

Under what he called the "401" rubric in the payroll plan, otherwise known as gas P5 billion to cover textbooks, teacher recruitment and training, school feeding programs and libraries.

On health, Andaya said 921 billion had been earmarked for enrolling indigent families in PhilHealth.

On the other hand, three agencies will receive the bulk of the proposed capital outlays under economic services: The Department of Public Works and Highways (P5.8 billion), Department of Transportation and Communications (P1.1 billion) and Department of Agriculture (P953 million), Andaya said.

He said the DPWH will use early to resurface some 40 municipal roads in Luzon under a project that will have P500 million for the widening of Quezon Avenue in Quezon City and P311 million for "roads that will support" the Subic-Clark expressway.

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Palace cautioned against lowering tariffs on oil imports

By Philip C. Tubeza

A RANKING LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF Representatives yesterday cautioned Malacañang against lowering the tariffs on oil imports, saying this would not guarantee lower oil prices but would only benefit the oil companies.

Deputy Majority Leader Eduardo Gullas said, "Our concern is that in the absence of a significant and definite benefit to consumers, any tax cuts on oil products will only translate into greater leeway to expand their margins, thus time and only at the expense of consumers but also at the expense of much-needed government revenue."

The government has been announced plans to temporarily reduce the tariff on imported oil products as a means to offset the impact of rising crude prices by 50 centavos per liter.

"This is ridiculous," Gullas said. "What's the point if we effectively cut oil taxes by 50 centavos per liter today only to have this increased per liter tomorrow by the oil companies citing their pump prices by P1 per liter?"

"Can regulators do anything to prevent oil companies from doing this? Our point is that a costly tax reduction should have tangible benefits to consumers. Otherwise, there's no point pursuing the cut," he said.

In his statement to the press, Gullas said: "If the government must cut oil taxes, it must do so only when oil prices decrease and stabilized over a certain period or had started going down."

"This way, oil companies will have no excuse whatsoever to further raise pump prices. Timing is crucially important," he said.

Gullas said he was also opposed to the temporary suspension of the VAT on oil purchases for the same reasons he was against the tariff cut.

Two weeks ago, Commissioner Guy Joseph Sanchaga revealed that the country's two oil refiners—Petron Corp. and Philippine Shell Petroleum Corp.—had made a whopping P11.8 billion combined in after-tax profits in 2005. This was up P5.34 billion or 88 percent from the P6.46 billion in combined after-tax earnings they posted in 2004.

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Mendiola: A bridge too far

From page A1

figure of more than 20,000.

The march moved as the first line of foot the government would comply with, and how the protesters would react to, the recent Supreme Court decision striking down Malacañang's wiretapping order and the controversial presidential Proclamation 1017 (PP 1017) granting wide-ranging powers to the police and the military.

On their most expansive day, the combined ranks of workers, students and other ideological affiliations joined forces on Recto and held 16 separate rallies one after the other.

Not an inch

The police surrendered not one inch of the bridge that they seized for decades as a symbol of antigovernment resistance.

The militants dispersed at 8 p.m. with not a single blow from police under concrete embedded with the memory of the bloody dispersal of protesters led by police in October last year—on a single dark Sunday in the police.

The singular demand for Mendiola's control, along with demands for a wage increase and a halt to administration efforts to revise the Constitution, brought together the so-called Broad Opposition and Independent Coalition within the fragmented Left.

'Gloria united us'

"We set aside our differences to work on the larger question, which is the legitimacy of Mr. Arroyo," Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales said.

The two main bodies of protesters, estimated by police to be more than 8,000 at one point, earlier converged on Liwasang Bonifacio, occupying separate ends for a program that started at noon.

BP 880

The militants claimed the police blockades were in defiance of the high court's decision allowing free assembly unless the military's fears could prove that the demonstrations posed a clear danger to society.

Calming Mendiola was a morally tense point between the protesters at least three times—on Quezon Bridge, at about Santa Ana Street and on the Recto overpass footpath.

At each blockade, police waved BP 880 at the marchers. That law has long been a source of controversy.

Police say it requires protesters to obtain a rally permit, but the militants argue that it is also protective that requests for such permits are deemed granted if the mayor fails to act on them within two days.

Jonas Mata of the alliance of Progressive Labor gave that argument during a standoff at the Recto.

'Just a glimpse'

"But what's the difference if you hold your rally at Mendiola or Liwasang? Ayaw nila ng Liwasang Mendiola kasi't kasi (They don't like Liwasang Mendiola because it's there)," replied Dr. Esmeralda.

At one point, Dr. Esmeralda told Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel during a standoff at the Recto overpass, "Kulang pa 'yan (That's not enough for us)."

Sept. Arturo Engkhuanan of the Manila police legal office claimed the city government had rejected the application because of what he said was a "clear and present danger" of violence from the ranks of the protesters.

Breaking nothing would some of the negotiations, half of the workers assisted through other routes, taking their leaves and Teresa Pingin tarmac to get to Mendiola.

They were finally assigned on Recto.

Jurisdiction president Hilton Pacifico said the blockades showed that the SC decision had no effect on the police.

Ka Bel in spirit

In a pre-recorded address to Filipinos which was broadcast at the Liwasang Bonifacio rally, detained Anakpawis Rep. Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran said a P125 wage increase and an end to Chacha were "the overwhelming demands of workers and the Filipino people today."

"We should struggle to oust Ka Mo Arroyo from the presidency. Poverty will worsen in our country for as long as she stays in power," said the ailing 73-year-old Beltran, who is being treated for chronic respiratory illness at the Philippine Heart Center.

The workers listened in silence to Beltran's message, which was played to the sound of sizzling songs in the background, and responded with applause and shouts for his freedom when it ended.

Cha-cha song

Beltran called on workers to continue their peaceful struggle until they surround their demands for a P125 across-the-board wage increase, the private workers' and a monthly P5,000 across-the-board salary increase for government employees.

In a message via phone patch from the Bataan complex, the Bataan 6 lawmakers—Representatives Abet Domingo, Rafael Mariano, Teodoro Casiño, Joel Villanueva and Lito Mora—praised the workers for their protest actions "despite the always government's attempts to divide, destroy and criminalize" acts and leaders.

Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas chair Emilio Ramos read a poem he composed against Cha-cha.

"Pag nailusot ang Cha-cha, mababawasan ang kapangyarihan ng mga Kongreso, sabay ng pagsa-sa mantala sa maliliit."

Future of the young

Ms. Theresa Pangilinan, the Cecilia Muñoz Palma University graduate who, pursued national attention after heckling Mr. Arroyo during commencement exercises, told the rally that some graduates were jobless.

"Their question to the Department is: What will they benefit from Mr. Arroyo's government? Will they be able to give us what we deserve? What is the assurance they can give us for our future?" she said.

Sen. Sonny Madrigal said he and Sen. Vicente Sotto III and Gringgoria is were the only politicians who came.

Reston briefly neared the march of some 1,500 supporters of ousted President Joseph Estrada after police declared victory.

The marchers, led by Senate's Movement Against Poverty (SMAP), chair Renato Lantino, had planned a brief stop at Mendiola on their way to Estrada but were blocked in the Mina.

Peaceful protest

After negotiations, it was agreed that the police would escort them to Plaza Salamanca via Recto.

The peaceful protest planned Rodriguez.

"We've satisfied because organizers and demonstrators lived up to their promise of just bringing out their concerns and sentiments," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita. He said he intended to meet with the group for future activities of this nature.

Ermita said reports that some groups might use the protests to try to unseat Mr. Arroyo probably came from people who wanted to give the impression that they have support in the government.

With reports from Lorgo A. del Puerto, Tina Santos, Michael Lim Ubac, DJC Calimbahan Jr. and Norman Bordadora

Cops had Don Chino virtually to themselves

By Volt C. Contreras

"SHE BRINGING YET ANOTHER matter of Don Chino. Boots started begging for compassion—but all it had yesterday was a blue swarm of riot police.

Policemen and presidential guards kept Labor Day demonstrations moved launched another group from the heavily Davis Bridge (formerly Mendiola), preventing them from getting a symbolic foothold on the street leading to Malacañang's gates.

'Silent prayer'

But at around 5 a.m. yesterday, one group composed of around 20 people was allowed to hold a "silent prayer" at the Recto statue.

KILUSANG Mayo Uno spokesperson Ryan Quarto is holding up a banner during a protest rally in Cagayan de Oro City

MEMBERS of Sanlakas rally on Colon Street in Cebu City to press their demand for a P125 wage increase.

WILSON Baldemoro, president of the Alliance of Nationalist and Genuine Labor Organizations, marshals his contingent during the Labor Day rally in Baguio City.

PROTESTERS march in the streets of Legazpi City during the commemoration of Labor Day

'If we also or occasion to denounce efforts to change the Constitution by' protesters in Davao City.

Cha-cha buckled

Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Marañon said in Bacolod City that business groups had agreed that those who could afford to should raise the wages of their workers to help cushion the effects of rising prices.

More than 4,000 workers attended rallies in the capital city of Negros Occidental.

In Iloilo City, around 2,500 protesters assembled in a rally led by Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and the Cagayanon Bayan (Bayan) at the Iloilo Science Amphitheater.

They hoisted activists portraying President Macapagal-Arroyo and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and dancing the "cha-cha" to show opposition to Charter change.

In Cagayan de Oro City, around 800 protesters participated in a rally led by Bayan, Gabriela, Anakpawis and the Cagayan Movement Against Arroyo's Cha-cha at the Rotary City Grandstand.

In Aklan, 300 protesters marched from Boracay Park to Gerardo Roxas in the capital town of Kalibo.

In Cebu, around 2,000 laborers joined separate rallies in Cebu Business in Cebu City. The rallies were peaceful, except for a brief confrontation between the Batallo ng Maragtasyanes and the BMG.

In Leyte, more than 500 workers in different militant groups held rallies held really at the Old Bus Terminal on Real Avenue in Tacloban City.

Calabarzon protests

An estimated 12,000 workers from eight provinces in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) staged protests in different parts of the region and demanded economic relief for workers instead of Charter change.

In Batangas City, around 1,000 workers and students also joined the protest mobilizations in four areas.

Dodo Casero, secretary general of the Bayanan rights group Bayan-ang in Southern Tagalog, said at least 100 workers were arrested by police and military troops from marching toward a park in Barangay Pallocan.

In Alitao, about 1,500 protesters from different militant labor groups joined the rally. They started marching at 8 a.m. from the Mines Aquino Park in Barangay Inosa to the Pangalusian monument in downtown Legazpi City.

Release Beltran

Beverly Quintillan, Bayan Muna public information officer, said her group would file party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran and five other congressmen facing rebellion charges to be freed.

The protesters also carried on a P125 daily wage increase and a P5,000 across-the-board raise for government employees.

In Tabaco City, also in Albay, over 2,000 laborers of Tabaco Port Cargo Corp., the biggest labor organizations in the city, staged a rally demanding a P320 daily wage increase and a P5,000 across-the-board raise for government employees.

In Daraga, around 1,500 workers staged a rally protesting for a P125 increase in daily wages.

In Cagayan de Oro City, about 1,000 paraded in the streets. They came from the Bayan in Balubalan, Elpas City and other towns of Misamis Oriental.

Muslims cry harassment

In Republic City, at least 700 protesters gathered at the plaza. In Calabasa City, angry Muslims accused hundreds of harassing them while they stayed at rally.

In the City of San Fernando in Pampanga, some 15,000 workers from the three biggest economic zones in Central Luzon demanded a minimum "living wage" of P600 daily.

The marchers belonged to several unions at the Bataan Economic Zone in Mariveles, Bataan; Subic Bay Freeport Zone in Zambales and the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga where 100,000 workers are employed in mostly exporting companies.

Emily Rojo-de, spokesperson of the Manggagawa sa Kalayaan ng Bataan (Maka-Bataan), said the current daily minimum wage in the region, ranging from P171.50 to P220.50, should be raised threefold to meet the basic needs of families.

The National Economic and Development Authority pegged the cost of living at P600 daily, she said.

Subic Bay Freeport

In Olongapo City, some 300 members of the Maka-Bayan in Zambales gathered at the gate of the Subic Bay Freeport to seek living wages.

Before they joined the rally, at least 120 garment workers from Clark were stopped for 30 minutes by police at Barangay Dinalupihan-Sapangbato, preventing to their leader Rizy Bautista.

Sister P. Burgos Jr., Jolene B. Bolonkvil, Carla P. Gomez and Jaya A. Gelbolo, Phil Hayas Bautista, Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Ash B. Rufino and Michael B. Aquino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Rolando Pinaca, Dennis Aquino, Andy Quiroz, Aquilino Z. Zonio, Grace Castel-Alberto, Jeoffrey Maitem and Michael Sarmiento, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Timothy Dayao, Gaudyl Lucas and Jhoanna Ballaran, Philippine Daily Inquirer Luzon Bureau

Correction

IN THE MAY 1 ISSUE, a story on Page A12—"Marcelo: Jul. 2006 to solve killings in Mindoro"—incorrectly described Roberto Tanoza, owner of Mamerto Velez Bridge, as a "Tanoza Marcos crony." Roberto Velez Bridge, Barangay Bakilid, Mamburao, Mindoro Occ. Tanoza Marcos crony." Roberto Tanoza, owner of Mamerto Velez Bridge, is

Sit down and talk, Gordon urges Palace, senators

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

AN ADMINISTRATION SENATOR yesterday called on President Macapagal-Arroyo and other senators to set aside their differences and sit down for a dialogue.

Sen. Richard Gordon said that even if the President and the senators could not agree on Charter change and the issue about Mr. Arroyo's alleged cheating in the 2004 elections, they should come to terms on programs that would alleviate poverty and improve the economy.

"We may not be able to agree on Cha-cha and [the Hello] Garci [issue] but we can talk about important issues to resolve problems to move the country forward," Gordon said.

He cited issues like studying the Value Added Tax impact on doing crude oil prices, coming up with programs to boost agriculture and giving Filipinos access to quality education.

Gordon, chair of the committee on constitutional amendments and revision of codes and laws, made the appeal amid the escalating hostility between the President and the Senate. Mr. Arroyo had accused the Senate of being obstructionist and of sweeping legislative "mess of democratization."

If Shahidul leader Sen. Marcos "Mike" Velarde accused Senate President Pro tempore Defensor about a meeting between the President and the senators.

Defensor confirmed that Velarde mentioned this to him last week, a day before Defensor met with former President Corazon Aquino and other opposition figures, business leaders and bishops in lunch "STOP Cha-cha Group" at Penang's Cha-cha."

"Mr. [Velarde] mentioned it in passing. I just kept quiet," Defensor said in an interview.

GORDON: Let's talk of important issues to move country forward.

Senators are at the forefront of a campaign against the people's initiative seeking to change the country's form of government from presidential to parliamentary, a system that would abolish the bicameral Congress into a unicameral legislature.

All but two of the 23 senators signed a resolution expressing opposition to the people's initiative to set "illegal" set of the Arroyo administration because it goes against a 1997 Supreme Court ruling declaring the unicameral and referendum act as inadequate for Charter change.

Defensor went into scheduled by recent decisions of the SC which dealt with Senate to Mr Arroyo's policies. The high court ruled as unconstitutional provisions of the department's executive Order 464 which barred all government officials from attending congressional inquiries without her consent.

The SC also nullified Mr Arroyo's Calibrated Preemptive Response which was used to stop protest rallies.

CABINET EXECS SUMMONED

Senate to test SC ruling today

By TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S COMPLIance within a Supreme Court ruling making her ban on executive officials' appearance in congressional hearings will be tested today when the Senate tackles three major economic bills.

Officials from the Department of Finance, Department of Trade and Industry, Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs have been invited to hearings to be conducted starting today by the committees on ways and means on fifth granting tax breaks to low-income earners, curbing smuggling and rationalizing incentives to investors respectively.

With the major portions of Executive Order No. 464 voided, officials from the executive department have no more excuse to decline the chamber's summons, said committee chair Ralph Recto.

"Those who sought refuge in EO 464 in refusing Senate subpoenaes or declining to answer legitimate questions will now have to strike the unfinished business they left behind," Recto said in a statement.

In its April 20 ruling on EO 464, the high court upheld Congress' right to compel executive officials to appear as inquiries in aid of legislation, voiding the order's provision requiring those officials to secure President's permission.

Officials had casually invoked the order to evade Senate inquiries into anomalies and hearings on executive since it was issued on Sept. 28 last year.

Recto pointed out that today's hearings on the three bills could be a good starting point to thrash out the differences between Malacañang and the Senate over the controversial order.

"If we are going to mend our broken relations, then these bills will be a good starting point. The key relations would these but if these would be the agenda," he said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. rebuffed the call by House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles for the Senate to step in to reconciliation and instead panchey legislation.

A suspension or termination of the hearings on anomalies, he argued, was tantamount to an abdication by the Senate of its "constitutionally mandated role" to check the activities of Malacañang and exercise its oversight functions.

Spurred by the SC ruling on EO 464, the senators had declared that they would resume inquiries on the supposedly overpriced ₱200-million Northrail project and the "Hello Garci" tape scandal.

GMA unveils P40-B package

From page A1

tatives from the government, business and labor sectors.

"This is the day for the workers all over the world and a day to mark the strides that the great Filipino workers has taken in one to the spirit of competence and competitiveness," Ms. Arroyo said.

In announcing for Labor Day package for workers, the President said she made it a point "to listen to the people's needs every day" while, she added, doubting there who only listened "to the call of self-interest and endless power."

"To the detribalists, I say: Listen to the people to their needs and let the President do her job. To our detribalists, I say: Step the comic and start to serve," Ms. Arroyo said.

Other benefits for workers announced by the President included:

- P1.2 billion in housing loans to be offered by Pag-Ibig at lower interest and longer repayment periods.
- P1.57 billion in loans to be provided by the Development Bank of the Philippines and Land Bank of the Philippines to employers and workers' groups for the purchase of buses using cheap fuel, like compressed natural gas, for the use of employees.
- A government allocation of P1 billion from its energy conservation savings to purchase shuttle buses for its own employees.
- An allocation of P1.2 billion for the starting up of Procurement Service (PS) shops in government offices. The commissaries will offer food and housing items 7 to 20 percent cheaper compared to stores.
- Taxpayer government revenue of P1 billion from the increase tax exemption of minimum wage earners.
- Government grant of training certificates-coupons amounting to P500 million for 15,000 people who would work in 183 centers.
- Allotment of P100 million for the rehabilitation of the Philippine General Hospital, other hospitals including P60 million from GSIS allocation of P400 million for the GSIS hospitalization support program, and P36 million for Philippine Health coverage for seniors (seasonal sugar workers) and other workers in the informal sectors.

Art contributed P635 million to compensate savings arising from workdays saved because a strike was averted also went into the composition of the President's P10.761 billion package of benefits for workers.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas told reporters that the workers got a "fairly good package" of benefits from the President.

Gov't pay raise

Sto. Tomas said government employees were elated by the President's announce that a salary raise was forthcoming for the 1.2 million people in the bureaucracy.

"All these years, it has always been the increase in the wages in the private sector that has been given priority, but for the first time we focused on government workers," the labor secretary said.

The last time government workers got a pay raise was in 2001, and the last time the Salary Standardization Law (SSL) was implemented was in 1994, according to Sto. Tomas.

Ms. Arroyo directed the Department of Budget and Management to include in the 2007 proposed budget the first tranche for the P120 billion implementation of the Salary Standardization Law. That will include the P11 billion in additional allowances for government workers, she said.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said the SSL would file a bill amending the SSL to simplify the salary grade system in government.

Andaya said teachers, doctors and nurses were the intended main beneficiaries of the amendment to the SSL.

Ms. Arroyo said workers had been hard up to enjoy their housing and salary loans to the fifth and 0.05, prompting her address to increase the maximum P12 billion in mortgages and penalties imposed on those delinquent borrowers.

Hike in floor pay

Labor speech, Mr. Arroyo urged labor and business to find a middle ground where they could sit down to discuss the granting of a wage increase for workers in the private sector.

"Business, trademark and creativity are the key to success," she said.

Donald Tee, president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the business sector was open to talks with labor groups to discuss a wage hike.

"We accept the call of the President," Tee told reporters. He proposed that business and labor leaders meet next week. "To facilitate a fulsome discussion we have to go about this before we go to tripartite [meeting]."

Before Ms. Arroyo had lunch with the labor leaders, she joined a 5:30 a.m. coffee break of call center employees of ClientLogic Philippines in Ortigas, Pasig.

According to her chief of staff, Michael Defensor, Ms. Arroyo also met with the National Security Council to discuss the Labor Day rallies in Metro Manila.

After the NSC meeting, Ms. Arroyo proceeded to the 28th office to attend mass Malacañang to open the new 2006 commission there.

Ms. Arroyo then took time out to talk to not possessed mentioned as the San Miguel gate of Malacañang.

Solons urged: Tap P19-B pork to fund pay hike

THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS of the Philippines (TUCP) has urged legislators to make their P19-billion pork barrel—the first one in seche funds could be used to finance the P1,000 monthly pay increase being demanded by government workers.

"We reckon that if members of Congress collectively waived at least 70 percent of their pork barrel, there will be enough money to fund a P1,000 monthly pay increase for all civil servants, on top of the P2,000 allowance mandatorily approved by the former," Tucp Rep. Antonio Tinio, a labor solons and current TUCP general secretary, said in a press statement.

By giving up their pork barrel, members of the House of Representatives and the Senate would "give meaning to the just-ending or the difficult time," according to Tinio, who introduced a resolution calling for the pork barrel of members to be used for salary increases.

Congressmen have increased their pork barrel to P60 million each this year from P40 million last year. This brings to P14.2 billion their aggregate pork barrel this year.

Senators have given themselves as much as P200 million each in pork barrel, for a total of P4.4 billion.

The pork barrel is a guaranteed fund that legislators spend on projects for their constituents. It usually involves funding for public works projects and subsidies for hospitals. Pork barrel funds are controlled on a particular area but aside costs than are spread among all taxpayers. Pork barrel spending is often allocated through last-minute budget bill insertions.

For Senate government passed a bill granting civil servants, effective July 1, a monthly allowance of P2,000.

But Rep. Rep. Jose Solomon, chair of the House appropriations committee, said the government should be a special bill, according to reports.

Senator said Congress could still approve the Tinio-authorized P1,000 allotment, which costs government P15.6 billion annually, under a P1,000 increase in the 2006 budget which is applicable now in force.

Last week, Herrera said that as a result of huge savings and improved revenue collections, the government could easily grant civil servants a monthly increase of up to P1,000.

Herrera said a P1,000 pay raise "would substantially ease the purchasing power that civil servants had lost to inflation since these salaries were last revised upward in 2001."

30,000 jobs offered . . .

From page A1

resort, manufacturing plants, as well as in the electronics and health industries. Overseas firms were looking for machine operators, welders, restaurant staff, electricians and engineers.

More productive

DOLE-National Capital Region Director Hernando Macli said the Job Go was a more "productive" way of celebrating Labor Day, in contrast to its more demonstrations.

"Perhaps the protesters can find value they can learn from here, rather than on the streets," he said.

He placed the crowd at about 5,000, a figure confirmed by Quezon City police.

By lunchtime, however, the crowd had diminished considerably, most many of the jobseekers had gone home after dropping off their application papers.

Unemployment rate

The unemployment rate in Metro Manila currently stands at 10.13 percent, while the national rate is 8 percent, according to Macli.

TUCP spokesperson Alex Agcaoili said the job fair was one way of connecting unemployed or underemployed workers to the job market.

"We realize that we can't solve unemployment on our own, even ten years, but we don't believe that the answer to the problem is by creating more wealth," Agcaoili said.

Work wanted

Annan Solivio, 24, was one of the jobseekers who squeezed through the thick crowd, hoping to land a job as a waiter abroad. He used to work for a coffee shop in South Korea, but was overworked.

Solivio said he job fair was a good idea and should be held "more often, if possible."

A Jorge graduate, Lisa Herrera, 20, said she was applying for any position related to her Commerce degree from the Technological Institute of the Philippines. Like Solivio, she also wanted to go abroad.

Merlo Serrano, 20, a recent high school graduate, was looking for a job to help him save up for college since he initially was having financial troubles.

He sympathized with the Labor Day protesters, who, according to him, were only expressing their sentiments about low wages against the rising prices of basic goods.

"Don't find a job, I might end up robbing, too," he said.

Job creation

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday crowed about her success in turning the unemployment rate by a quarter since she last this year, amid criticism from the labor sector including the TUCP.

Key speech for her business and labor leaders in Malacañang, Ms. Arroyo reported that low job creation was more dashed the number of jobless Filipinos to three million from four million since the last poll in 2004.

While most of the jobs created were low-quality and sometimes seasonal, especially in the agriculture sector, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the bottom line for the government was to find employment for those looking for work—whatever the pay or skills required.

"No matter what place in the world you go, there is no economy where all the people are working in offices. There should also be farmers, plumbers and cleaners," said Sto. Tomas in defending the President's job creation program.

The definition of jobs anywhere in the world is the same. The quality of their jobs cannot be any better than ours because the definition is the same."

Mismatch

The government has understood that there is no job crisis in the country.

According to Sto. Tomas, there is only a mismatch between the job seekers' skills and the jobs available.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila, however, said most Filipinos were choosy about the work they wanted.

Sto. Tomas noted that some of the most high-paying jobs were blue-collar, like welders, electricians, electronics and plumbers that do not require a college degree but a post-vocational training.

She added that while workers in other countries boasted of higher salaries, they are as bad to contend with higher costs of living.

"This is the reason we are moving to bring electricity to rural areas. Those are already a high wage economy; we have the highest wage in the region except for Malaysia and Singapore, but are also have a high cost of living," Sto. Tomas said.

Decent wages

But according to the TUCP, the country's minimum salary rate has increased in the past five years.

Agcaoili explained: "We don't agree with the rosy picture that there are many jobs out there. This is why we are insisting that the government should move for labor-intensive rather than capital-intensive investments, which create permanent jobs with decent wages."

He said a decent wage (which is not the same as a minimum wage) should give workers a decent living, meaning "those spent mainly a day, money for recreation, some amount for savings, and they should not look to funds for education and transportation."

Agcaoili said the government should also consider suspending the implementation of the 12-percent value-added tax in oil products because the continued rise in fuel costs had taken a big chunk out of the workers' pay.

With a report from LJ Delano

DOJ APPEAL PLAN

Let go, lawyer in Subic rape case tells Gonzalez

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE PRIVATE PROSECUTOR HANDLING THE TRIAL OF US MARINES ACcused of raping a Filipino woman yesterday called on Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to stop fighting for the rights of the accused and let the proceedings take their course.

"I think he should stop issuing statements about this case and perform his functions accordingly. He has no official business anymore as secretary of justice regarding this case. Therefore, he should stop talking," said Evalyn Ursua.

Gonzalez had earlier assailed the rejection by Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 139 Judge Benjamin Pozon of the secretary's motion seeking to downgrade the participation of three of the four accused servicemen as accessories, instead of principals, in the case.

Gonzalez said the court's decision was based overwhelmingly and did not tackle the merits of the DOJ's petition. He vowed to file today a motion before disputing Pozon's order.

The decision, however, represented a victory for the private prosecution panel, which was strongly opposed to Gonzalez's resolution.

"Filing a motion for reconsideration will not change the decision of the court, and he has no business [doing that]. He as Secretary of Justice should respect the decision of the court, and just let the defense lawyers take the next steps," Ursua said the lawyers.

Instead of urging for the rights of the accused, he should just follow the proper procedure. It is not for him to comment on rules," she added.

Defense lawyers said they would appeal Pozon's order before the Court of Appeals, as they believed the court had no right to reject a resolution of the justice secretary himself.

Accused of raping the woman in a van in the Subic Bay Freeport on Nov. 1, 2005 are Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, S/Sgt. Chad Carpenter and Marine Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis.

Nene to Lito: It's suicide to run vs Jojo in Makati

SENATE MINORITY LEADER AQUILINO PIMENTEL Jr. yesterday warned Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid that it would be political suicide for him to run for mayor of Makati City against incumbent Jejomar Binay.

"In ordering Senator Lapid to run for mayor of Makati, President Arroyo pulls out her last stinger in the Senate and pushes him to commit political hara-kiri," Pimentel said in a statement.

Pimentel doubted that Lapid, who hails from the President's home province of Pampanga, has a "fighting chance" against Binay, whose "voting strength" has become solid over the years "because of his effective leadership."

Lapid has said he is being urged on by the Palaces and her husband to challenge Binay in next year's polls, wrest control of the city's top post, and push for charter change.

Rising a dose ally of indicted President Joseph Estrada who handed Mr.Arroyo a rival for the presidency in 2004, the late actor Fernando Poe Jr., is in his fifth term as chief executive of the country's premiere financial district. TJ Burgonio

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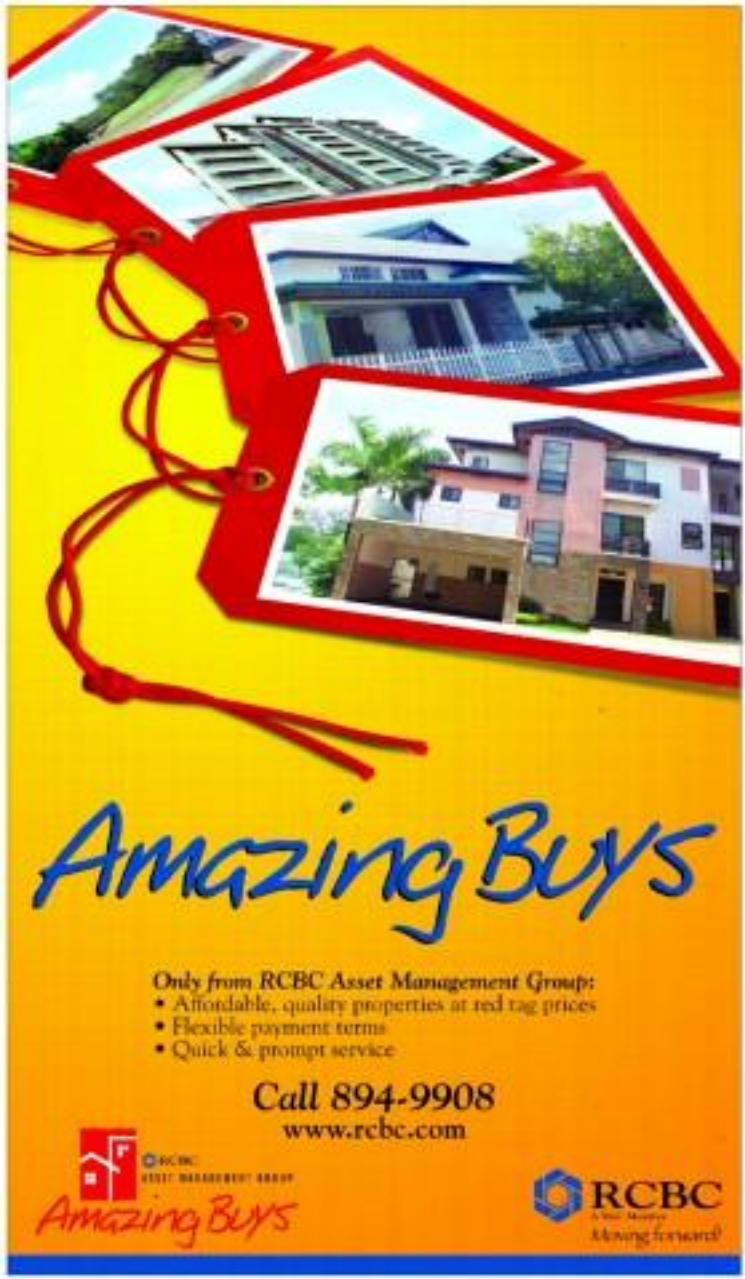

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83 crucial laws useless, says Cha-cha leader

MANY OF THE COUNTRY'S LAWS, INCLUDing those providing for countryside development, environmental protection and educational reform, are useless or unenforceable because they lack provisions for funding, a major proponent of the so-called people's initiative to amend the Philippine Constitution said yesterday.

Citing a preliminary survey by the House of Representatives' committee on oversight, Raul Lambino of Pilipino ng Bayan said, "At least 83 crucially important laws have been stranded because they remain unfunded, or have been under-funded to the tune of a total of P211 billion."

Among those unfunded or under-funded laws, according to Lambino, are the Internal Revenue Act; the magna carta for scientists, small farmers, and disabled persons; the Social Reforms and Poverty Alleviation Act; the Countrywide Industrialization Act; the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers; and the Higher Education Modernization Act.

"Under the present structure of government, the chief executive may have his or her own agenda, and the House and the Senate may also have their own programs," Lambino said in a press statement. "This is highly regressive. This is why we have stranded laws."

Lambino said that in a parliamentary system the natural convergence of executive and legislative powers would yield a single unified agenda.

"The blending of executive and legislative capabilities under a parliamentary regime will ensure the gospel feeding and expeditious execution of all measures," Lambino said.

Lambino is a member of the Charter-change Advocacy Commission and was a member of Malacañang's Constitutional Commission that drafted a proposed new constitution. Vernon Bercasio

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, May 2, 2006
3rd Week of Easter
Memorials

1st Reading: Acts 7, 51-8, 1
Gospel: John 6, 30-35

The people said to Jesus, "What sign will you perform that we may see and believe you. What work do you perform? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as Scripture says: They were given bread from heaven to eat."

Jesus then said to them, "Truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven. My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. The bread God gives is the One who comes from heaven and gives life to the world." And they said to him, "Give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty."

Commentary

Stephen, one of the deacons and the first martyr, is stoned to death for preaching the unity of Jesus. He lived like Jesus, calling for the poor and preaching Good News; could he also like Jesus, with the words of forgiveness of his enemies on his lips and entrusting his life to God the Father. Jesus too gives of his bread, his work, his life to his community and he invites us to feed of his gifts to us. When we come to this Bread of life, as Stephen did, it transforms our life and we begin to live better, more as death may claim us.

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Workers ...

...on May Day rallies

Demonstrations were planned in major cities across Indonesia, with up to 30,000 people expected in the capital alone to pressure governments plans to revise a labor law. The new law would cut severance packages and introduce more flexible contracts that would ship-carry at workers security.

"Don't change the law," thousands of laborers chanted at Jakarta's main downtown roundabout, as others arrived in buses and trucks, wearing green, yellow and red flags and banners expressing their demands.

Almost 12,000 police were deployed into the streets, some carrying tear shields and manning water cannons, said Maj. Gen. Firman Ganiadi, the police chief.

Embassies and companies told foreigners to stay away from the demonstrations, though there were no reports of incidents by midday.

In Cambodia, thousands of police brought the capital, Phnom Penh, to a virtual standstill during a government clampdown on unauthorized May Day demonstration.

Opposition leader Sam Rainsy said police detained a protest organizer for two hours after hundreds of workers gathered in Freedom Boulevard — a main road that runs into the capital — seeking to march through the city.

The government had denied permission for the rally, allowing only one official May Day demonstration at Olympic Stadium, and police with riot shields and batons physically prevented protesters from marching.

"Cambodia still lacks real democracy," Sam Rainsy said. "There is no real respect for human rights."

Thousands of garment factory workers rallied in Bangladesh to demand the United States and Europe clasp tariffs on their products, saying they would eventually ease the industry's collapse.

Other laborers wound through the streets of the capital, Dhaka, banging drums and singing as they called for better working conditions in the country's dangerous factories.

"No more deaths in factories," they chanted. And "we want daily free holiday."

In South Korea, protesters demanded equal status and protection for all workers, and vowed to thwart a government plan to negotiate a free trade agreement with the United States. Critics say the pact will cost jobs.

Russia

In Russia, hundreds of thousands of people took part in May Day rallies as labor unions and workers across Europe held events to protest unemployment, poor working conditions and low wages.

In other countries activists used the day to complain about their governments or the international situation.

Official events staged by the ruling pro-Kremlin Russia party overshadowed unauthorized protest marches by the opposition communists in Russia.

In the capital Moscow, 25,000 people gathered opposite the mayor's office in the central Tverskaya Street to hear speeches from trade union leaders and the mayor and listen to a concert, the Ria Novosti news agency reported.

The communists marched from a square where there is a statue of Lenin to their usual rallying spot opposite the Bolshoi Theater by a statue to Karl Marx, RTV television reported. Overall, 1.3 million people participated in May Day rallies in Russia.

In Germany labor unions protested the impact of globalization on Europe's largest economy, accusing firms of shedding jobs for quick profits and urging the government to reduce a stubborn unemployment.

Michael Sommer, the head of Germany's main union federation, complained that in addition to high unemployment, Germany had a growing army of people earning minimum wages, despite the country's economic profits.

"We don't want American conditions," Sommer said at a rally in Wolfsburg, home of car maker Volkswagen AG. "It is really time to stop this madness. Those in government must show sensitivity instead of pushing new discussions on the long-term unemployed."

Signs of faster economic growth and massive job cuts by German firms have pushed up unemployment in Germany—it now stands at 11.3 percent—undermining government finances and the country's generous welfare state.

Turkey

In Istanbul, Turkish police detained some 68 protesters who were shouting slogans against the International Monetary Fund and the United States.

The protesters in Taksim Square were members of the Turkish Communist Party, the Labor Party and a group that called itself "Struggle." They did not have a permit for a May Day demonstration, although other large protests did have.

The group refused police demands to disperse, and police fired pepper spray and tear gas at the crowd. Footage broadcast on CNN Turk showed protesters fighting with police and one protester kneeling in a bus as another officer beat him with his fists.

About 2,000 opposition supporters gathered in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, in a show of defiance after the jailing of the opposition leadership by the authoritarian government.

The wife of Alexander Milinkevich, Irina Kalet, told the crowd she had visited her husband in prison, where the jail authorities had moved all the opposition leaders to separate cells, and refused to answer his inquiries about his health.

"They can't murder freedom, you can't kill it. Your merciless repression by the police is the only lying the day of freedom closer," she said.

AP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Diminishing space

LAST EASTER SUNDAY, PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo announced that all death row convicts would be spared and the maximum penalty commuted to life imprisonment. Later, after her decision met with a strong reaction from those in favor of the death penalty, she said that the ban always been for the duration of the maximum punishment.

EDITORIAL The President has been very vocal about abolishing the maximum penalty for death convicts, but she has been disadvantaged by silence on the killings of militants and activists. Aren't militants and activists human beings, too, like death convicts? And isn't the life of a militant as valuable as the life of a single convict?

Since Mr Arroyo took over as President, 124 leaders and members of party-list groups, militants and activists have been killed. This year alone, 17 have been slain. The latest victims were Jayson Delen, Bayan Muna-Caraballo Norte secretary general, who was shot dead by two men on a motorcycle; and Jun Mitukkamin, a member of Bayan Muna in Datuga, Aklan, who was shot in the head, neck and chest by two unidentified men.

Robert de Castro, Bayan Muna national deputy secretary general, immediately linked the latest two killings to the statement of Lt. Gen. Pedro Cabuay, Southern Luzon Command chief, that "the insurgency problem in Bicol has been cleaned up." De Castro said he was afraid that Cabuay was referring "to us, the legitimate organizations."

The 124 killed in the past five years were either members of party-list groups such as Bayan Muna and Anakpawis, people's organizations like Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) and the peasant group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) or human rights workers, according to the human rights group Karapatan.

Believing specifically in the cases of slain Bayan Muna members, Rep. Satur Ocampo said the circumstantial evidence in these murders pointed to the military's involvement in the killings. Marie Hilao-Enriquez, Karapatan secretary general, said they believed that the killings were not isolated incidents. She said: "We see a pattern. These are systematic killings, probably part of government policy [against militants]."

The killings have not escaped the notice of the US State Department. In its annual human rights report, posted on the US Embassy website, it said: "Killings of community activists, church workers, lawyers and members of leftist political parties, particularly the left-wing political party Bayan Muna, increased during the year [2005]."

The US State Department said that "pervasive weaknesses in the rule of law, official impunity and the wide disparity between rich and poor contributed to cynicism about official justice."

Right after democracy was restored with the ouster of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the accession to the presidency of Corazon Aquino, there was a move to eradicate the democratic space. Leftist groups that used to wage their struggle underground were encouraged to go above ground and to wage a parliamentary fight instead of a bloody war. But now, if the slaying of scores of militants and activists is any indication, that policy seems to have been abandoned.

The Arroyo administration and the military, of course, always deny that the killing of militants and activists is now state policy. They say that it could be a case of leftists killing leftists. But why should leftists do that when they need more warm bodies to wage their downgraded and parliamentary fight more effectively?

The killings of militants and activists do not seem to bother the high officials of the government, Presidency Arroyo the chief among them. The President has at least made some gestures and announcements about going after the killers of journalists, but there has been no peep from her about the slaying of militants. On the contrary, she has pronounced and decorated suspected masterminds of the killings, like former Col. Jovito Palparan Jr. who was pronounced "a major general in a matter of years and now even awarded the Distinguished Service Star.

The President has been very vocal about abolishing the maximum penalty and exonerating the sentences of death convicts. If she's not being hypocritical and if she wants to be consistent in her stand on the death penalty, she should order the military to stop the extrajudicial killings of militants and activists. At the very least, the militants and activists, if indeed they have committed crimes, are entitled to due process before they are condemned to death.

Those hapless messengers

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

TOMORROW, MAY 3, WE MARK "WORLD Press Freedom Day (WPFD) for the 15th time since the United Nations established the day in 1991. Where do we stand? They still kill the messengers. "Though it be honest, it is never good to bring bad news," Shakespeare's count of wash.

Since 1986, the Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists reports 37 journalists have been murdered. The Macros dictatorship killed bodies to count. Tallies typically differ, but not by much.

Worldwide, 156 journalists were killed in the line of duty in 2005 alone, International Federation of Journalists data show. The Iraq conflict has claimed 81 from no-fire.

"This is the largest annual number of media professionals killed in recorded history" Unesco director general Koichiro Matsuura notes. "This first single confirmation of a trend that has been rising over the past several years. Being a journalist is very dangerous and, sadly, is becoming more so."

Thus, the UN selected a Lebanese TV newscaster, maimed in a terror attack, to receive the 2006 Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. May Chidiac lost one of her hands and her left leg in a car bomb overdose.

The Cano Prize is named after a Colombian editor who was assassinated in 1985, after he exposed drug links to his country. It forms part of WPFD aims.

The body count, however, tells only part of the problem. Journalism is a "vocation" compared to knowing and reporting the news. The process itself varies. Some of it governments and vested interests abet legislate in formation on specious grounds.

"Necessity is the plea of every infringement of human freedom," Parliamentarian William Pitt once observed. "It is the argument of tyrants. It is the creed of slaves."

The arguments of necessity use more than 300 journalists arrested last year for doing their jobs, the World Association of News wants. Iraq leads.

• The Queen of Cartoons has been arrested 126 times for opposing tyranny or manipulation. Its most intense pain came "from not being able to present my family during my imprisonment."

• The Myanmar military junta imprisoned journalist Ian Than-Nu for seven years. Editor U Win Tin has spent 16 years in Rangoon's jails. Ian Than-Nu's wife now international coverage helped.

• Iranian editor Akbar Ganji was jailed for six years. Rand Brown spent two years behind bars in Cuba. Many of his colleagues remain in prison. But there's more no-word about Abdelhalk Ali al-Hamari of Ibarizi, who was jailed in Libya in 1973. If alive, he'd be the longest imprisoned journalist.

• Journalist Gao Yu has filed a story for New York-based Chinese Democracy Forum. The story was about the propaganda instructions that the Chinese government imposed on newspapers on the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre. On Tuesday, police had Yahoo! provide, on the account, the details in the Chinese authorities.

Those who target the press in Mexico, Colombia and the Philippines "are local political chiefs, cultural corruption, and drug traffickers," notes Spain's Federico of Urbaltejo Foundation for Press Freedom. "The judicial system is so inefficient and impunity is so high, it becomes easy to kill journalists."

Gangs on murder remain in Hindu Korea, Cuba, Syria, among other countries, says the International Press Institute. Mafiosi, who straddle Iran's courts, unchained 30 dailies and four magazines that called for democratic reforms.

Censorship assembles "standing army," to name a William Blake image. "(They) bind with iron the mind."

There's a new unwelcome issue: press censors can kill. Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad triggered riots in Indonesia, Iran and other countries.

"Much of Islamic literature about Muhammad is hagiography, i.e., unrelenting reprise," writes BBC's Arab Affairs analyst, Magdi Abdelhadi. It contrasts with another Islamic tradition, based on the Koranic verse: "Say: I am but a mortal like yourselves."

There's been confusion between the Islamic ban on any pictorial representation and respect for the Prophet. It illustrates the gap between the West's secular liberal values and the Middle Eastern societies' predominantly religious outlook.

Part of the Western consensus is that pork ban or religious figures is acceptable. Magdi Abdelhadi adds, "some Muslim activists ... are determined to redefine the boundaries of that consensus" ...and the press is where the clash occurs.

In Asian, "the Philippines has the longest history of press freedom." But it has not been a land of easy under some presidents. Marcos unchained the press' pouch. Linked to cure it by economic pressure. And Macapagal-Arroyo used imagined "special powers" to muffle dissident voices.

"A number of toxic and villains carry pens, cards," says Time pointer out. "Some of all are dignified, corrupt even. Pit rats curve the article, readers expect the difficult. For too many subscribers copy contains no solid reporting."

The UN Development Program included the press in assuring the right to be free from poverty, Unesco adds. More than a billion people live on less than $1 per day. Can that number be halved, as the first of eight Millennium Development Goals suggests, by 2015?

The Philippines and 175 other countries pressed, at the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society held in Tunisia, that "freedom of expression and the free flow of information, ideas and knowledge are essential for development."

Now, if they'll just stop shooting the messengers. That would do for a start.

Moving on

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

WHAT DO THE SUPREME COURT'S 1812 votes to junk EO 464 and the celebrated persuasive response and the Stop Cha Cha movement's sweeping list Friday have in common?

Two things.

First, they are both a cause for elation. The junking of EO 464 by votes of 14-0 and the CPR by a vote of 13-0 shows the justices at their finest. It restores confidence in a battered justice system and offers hope that the law in the country may finally find its natural connection to justice. I've already said my piece about the Supreme Court ruling on EO 464 – that oppression should never have been allowed to exist in the first place and should have been struck down by the justices both of the courts of law and public opinion the very instant it started its very ugly head. But better late than never.

Better late than never as well to hail the Supreme Court for what it did to CPR. It does have, which was to remove from our faces another humongous oppression in the form of CPR. That, too, should have been struck down the very instant it raised its head, without waiting for its effects to unfold on the very day devoted to celebrating Press Freedom, which was in 2005 unfortunately a subversion hailed around the world, when the PNP ordered rallies banning activities for them the justices for showing enlightenment however overdue. Truly, they must have heeded GMA's injunction to discern good and evil.

"Bravo" was the word Joaquin Bernas used to describe the EO 464 and it's just as apt a word to describe CPR. The benevolence of the first became patent when Vice Adm. Mateo Mayuga cleared Lt. Gen. Romeogracio Esperon and company of rigging the 2004 elections while the shelling there of that gag order lay on everyone's tongue. And the benevolence of the second became patent when political referee Gabriel Claudio said that, unlike Thailand whose prime minister resigned out of public furor over his misdeeds, we did not have people protesting EDSA on the streets – that while his sage views routinely beating up members and calling a rallyboard.

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Moving on

THERE'S THE RUB

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The gathering at Club Filipino last Friday to stop Cha-Cha, which drew in a good group of bishops and businessmen, was as well a cause for elation. It was a threefold step in halt a runaway train (that had the people for its passenger) about to jumpstart at the end of the tracks. The "Stop" in "Stop Charter" hit the nail on the head, unequivocally as it did the sentiments of the majority of the population. "Go among over or pursue." (At the right time in the right way.) Including the shift in spin (bureaucracy versus pol federalism has its place in the mix—but not this time, not this way. The problem is not the Charter, it is the system. The solution is not to change the Charter, it is to change the leaders.

Which brings me to the other thing that the Supreme Court decision to strike down EO 464 and CPR and the bishops' and businessmen's decision to launch "Stop Charter" have in common. They are also a source of chagrin.

That they are a source of elation and chagrin at the same time is not entirely paradoxical. They are a source of chagrin because they highlight one thing, which is the amount of effort we all need to take just to stop the impositions and oppressions that are springing from the head of a non-president lower than the spawn of countless fake coups. We have to spend an enormous amount of time and energy just to be able to get us back to the starting line, that starting line being what we accomplished with the two fakes—the last putting an angel in the DNA in power—which was to restore freedom and decency to the country.

Instead, what we got, GMA has stopped being on the defensive and has gone on offensive, unleashing, among other things those three

Next page

Samar priests vs Marcosian tactics

THE DAVIDSON/MARIN COLLECTION OF PHILIPPINE history at the Ohio site (through "people's initiative," a local government-law initiative) is unanimous in good government because it uses accessibility from total misinformation when it was gathered. There are reports that the Commission on Elections, showing unquestionable native loyalty and celebration, has proceeded to "verify" the signatures.

Both the selection and verification violate truth, propriety and decency in a word, the two "people's initiatives" bear all the earmarks of a Machiavellian conspiracy.

It is heartwarming to note, though, that the clergy of the Diocese of Borongan is not taking the Cha-cha signature campaign lying down. As espoused by the bayanan in its Apr. 23 issue, bishops, monsignors, deans and VF priests have issued a pastoral letter criticizing the whole "circus" for "deceit and misinformation." The letter noted "the truth will be the final," was used in all the parishes of the Diocese on Sunday, September 11, 2005. In a detailed account, it told of how it broad daylight, government leaders pulled the wool over the eyes of "gullibleizens."

In white photos, signatories were taken from Pirmahan Island, Jiabong, Motiong and the municipal dance shows of Basiluan and Rubroy Council meetings. In quite a number of instances, people were assured of a handsome economy and development projects, but not of the solution to problems in personal problems. Government resources, not the least those of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, were used to bring about for the signature campaign, even as barangay chairpersons and members of the police openly admitted that they solicited signatures with the "blessing" of.

In refuting more directly the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' position on Charter change, Bishop Medroso and his priests showed moral courage that should be salutary and inspiring to other bishops and priests and to those supporting Cha-cha.

Today's pastor's initiatives reminded me of

COMMENTARY

Lutgardo B. Barbo
Ateneo School of Government

two past incidents.

The first incident goes back to the time I was still in law school. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roberto Concepcion, not professor in Ateneo Central Law, was explaining to us why he had to attend parliamentary duty in person. He believed that the "televisibility" on the Martial Commissioners' was a subtle pressure of natural hostile technology as members—who was constrained, and did not prove anything—despite the Court's dispositive ruling that "... there is no more legal obstacle to the PETA Commission having commenced its work and effect." He said that President Marcos tried to influence, and not as subtly, the justices' decision on the matter through bribery and threats.

The second incident happened when I was the presiding justice of Eastern Samar. One of the influential Catholic nuns/educators involved in the 1987 Constitutional Convention parents, who pleaded himself in being a member of the circle of intellectuals who "influence" the vote, rejected me in the November's official nomination. Without as much prodding, and with gleeful dominance, he confessed his "electoral role" and just based how they ratified the 1973 Constitution. He said the Constitution was ratified by "acclamation" and that "Rome your hands if you loved those idiot of clar and carabaos," or, "Your hands up higher if you were patriotic." Or, there question like: "Do you want to go home now? Hand up and vote—or you stayed!" or, "You want to see how beautiful the Film Lady is? Hands up all of you." And then the ubiquitous Comelec camera-the world zoom in and take pictures to proved the "voting." The factual constitutional referendum in 1973 is now the de-

Ilocano heritage

AT LARGE

Rose Jimenez-David

Casa Bella Emilia, a small hotel owned by the Dias family and managed by son Bobby, has a few months old, Casa Emilia Pastillo is a charming edifice, designed along tropical-Mexican lines, with a small rotating fountain greeting you in the open courtyard as you enter.

Please see gee there, a Dias daughter. She director Marilou Dias Abaya, was on the phone giving instructions to her crew who had just arrived in Laoag, Marilou's daughter, Monica, was busy attending to their guests, including Lucile Lazar and her companions led by her local manager Pablo Tavitian.

Also booked at the hotel were some Japanese tourists, led by leading Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban and his wife, who all had taken a break from their duties at the "summer capital" of Baguio to attend the Paoay Rotis and the Ilocano concert given by Lucile Lazar and Pascual Conception, who hails from Paoay.

Then talk over dinner shifted from culture and the arts, including the politics behind several controversies bedeviling art circles, to politics itself, as we found ourselves in the midst of "Chief" and express our appreciation for the high tribunal's fearless decisions of late. The pleasant evening was capped by a "nightcap" of the famous Ilocano empanada, which we were informed is now being served at selling Roko (to which the full president's supervision).

* * *

IN AN ARTICLE in "Manila News and Features," Dr. Emma Linda Araullo published an old-time popular song that is on the decrease on cultural matters, and a very interesting story about an encounter between Lloyd and a young gal friend.

"Five years ago," writes Tavitian, "a strip of a girl named Gemma Ilano, then 14 years old, married seven loans with her father, Esmund, to hear Cecile Lloyd perform in Tagaytay-on-Day. The rumor when the girl asked for an autograph and it... and ended up listening to the girl who happened to be a piano student. And as Lloyd gave her several tips, the workshop turned to find a good teacher.

"She did, in the person of pianist Irma Aranga Quiazo. Within two years, the girl won a place in the National Music Competition for Young Artists and later a concerto competition in Metro Manila.

"It only to would that morning in Tagaytay, Irma will share the stage with her piano pupil."

* * *

I LOOK forward to seeing these artists, as well as the other performers, at the concert at the Paoay Church to launch National Heritage Month. Might we be witnessing the debut of a promising artist of the same caliber as Lucile?

I look forward to a multi-decker tour of our visit to Ilocos Norte—including tours of Paoay, Sarrat, Batac, San Nicolas and Laoag, and visits to local chi Ilocano weaving areas, accessories, banners, and other Ilocano items. The launching of National Heritage Month will be capped with a grand fireworks display by the Paoay Lake, which should provide memorable scenes to complement the evening's concert.

Because of the distance from Manila, Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte remain somewhat off the beaten track of domestic tourism. But gradually, more and more people are finding their way to these areas to see the historic churches of Vigan, the heritage churches of Ilocos Norte, and the beauties of Pagudpud offering compelling attractions. But as they each in on a gradually-more-less basis, local governments should also remember that in their responses to welcome the hordes, they shouldn't lose sight of the fact that it is precisely the uniqueness and the natural blessings of the environment that attract visitors. Preserving, conserving and promoting that heritage is part of their mandates.

After Annan

WORLD VIEW

Shashi Tharoor

Often, a necessary general can raise an awkward question but not dictate the appearance answers. Annan's historic speech to the General Assembly in 1998 on intervention set a demented Islamic blossoming as think tanks and setting up of international tribunals to bring about such intervention to protect the oppressed. The idea is often seen stimulating international legitimacy, as the secretary general's pronouncements often have less impact on the actions of governments than do the Pope's actions on birth control.

The secretary general knows that he can accomplish little without the support of members whose finances on the issue of conduct he might otherwise wish to condemn. He cannot afford to allow frustration at any one issue to affect his ability to elicit cooperation from every member on a range of others. Annan once made the point by saying of the Chinese: "I can't afford to have a row on the head when you have your fingers between his teeth."

Today's single-superpower world also means that the secretary general must manage a relationship that is far from equal. Annan's predecessor Javier Perez de Cuellar, embarked on ambitious administrative reforms, but were unable to address the far greater levels of procedural and organizational inertia in areas under the authority of the United States.

No necessary general has enjoyed real independence from governments: the UN operates with no embassies or intelligence services, and members must rely on national sources for information and analysis. A secretary general's reach does not extend far group, and language cannot control across the member states' frontiers—or their pocketbooks.

Indeed, today, the secretary general commands great diplomatic legitimacy—then greater moral authority—but real political power than the UN Charter suggests. To be effective, he must be skilled at engaging world leaders, forging a public diplomacy that is behind the scenes tactful, and able to engage the loyalties of a wide array of external actors, including non-governmental organizations, business groups and journalists. He also must be sensitive to the anxieties of the poor and sensible enough to know that their interests are oppressive in no regard, while remaining true to his own efficiency with the wealthy and powerful. Kofi, by and large, has managed this delicate balance. In the Security Council, especially in his permanent members, while staying sensitive to the priorities and positions of the General Assembly. And he has proved sensitive issues with particularly sensitive issues, such as the Middle East, his mandates online the issues they provoke him.

Above all, the secretary general needs a vision of the higher purpose of his office and an awareness of its potential and limitations. In other words, to be successful, he must conceive and project a vision of the job as it should be, while administering and defending the organization as it is. That's an impossible job. (Project Syndicate)

Shashi Tharoor is UN Under-Secretary General and author of a collection of literary essays, "Bookless in Baghdad."

Regards

DEAR DOC,

We've probably had enough of me by now. I'm assuming. I'm the last person you want to hear from. You might not admit it for fear of offending me, but I count my blessings when I am thinking of you specifically that is more point. Although I've been working as mad either people's thoughts, hoping that if I concentrated hard enough I'd have the magical ability to read minds.

I saw you in the movie theatre three months ago on your own about to watch "The Chronicles of Narnia." I was wearing a full-length shirt with blue stripes, a pair of Guess Trashes and a New York hiphop cap. You shirt resembled mine, except that the blue in yours were wider and you obviously weren't in hip-hop attire. In case you noticed me, you gave me no indication of what the heck I was there for, and whether you could spare yourself some awkward moments if I (or you) were to acknowledge that we were in the same place.

You didn't have to worry. I passed in front from an innocuous distance and you didn't notice. Besides, there wasn't any necessary. I suppose it's strange enough to see one of your patients outside your office, when you're trying to spend "quality time" with your family, much. I wouldn't want to see my boss in a session with nurse and smiles. But it must be even more unreasonable when the patient is a self-confessed love interest like me.

Why did I like you like me.

We met last March during my very first psychotherapy session, where I didn't even know what that meant. (Seems so long ago, doesn't it?) What happened that day I don't expect you to remember, for this impression are often limited by irrational hallucinations.

But I bet you can recall how the last session went. It happened five months later on a humid Thursday afternoon. I had taken a long but enjoyable 15-minute walk to your office. There's nothing like hopping along Malate Avenue in an Old Navy shirt and retro sneakers while the sun's rays make you go with their direct, intelligent march. I had never looked worse, literally. My hands were bleeding from self-inflicted cuts, my face looked pale, my eyes droopy from sleeplessness, and my hair—oh God, the long unruly hair on my scalp that spawned in a thousand different directions—let's just say I needed a trim.

Coming off perhaps the worst day of my life, I gave you a telephone call. "Doc, it's me," I said. "If you're free, I'd like to see an appointment tomorrow."

"Didn't I tell you to call me when you think about leaving yourself?" you inquired, concerned.

"I know you know, and that my mother had told you. But I asked because I wanted to hear your concern, to hear that you cared. What are doctors for if beyond the tests, analyses and prescriptions, they don't affirm a serious interest in their patients' well-being? The phone call was for no reason other than to hear your voice. I was thinking you acknowledge that something wrong had happened, and that you gave a damn. It always feels good to have somebody telling you to take care.

When I saw the first hair session, I didn't get much of a response from you. Just the usual "Hi" and "Have a seat." Disappointed, I was some point must compound and understanding still, inordinately pinning hopeless on your new Communicator as if 20-year-old with dyed blood on their fingers were a serious sight. I suppose you smelled all this. Were you aware that the depressed saver was the kind to give a rat's ass about their physical appearance? Did you know what was going on inside? And is it serious and hot reserved behavior? Who your strategy was to commence on quickly on core issues—both physical and mental—so you didn't prompt them to pounce on with their med-extended?

Unlikely. Because you weren't that great a doctor. You weren't the old sage with silver hair I imagined you would look like at the Malcolm Grace character from Wife played. You were just a middle-aged man who hung his diplomas and certificates on the wall, with a fairly decent collection in his shelf, and who had that one-way magic with words that I was so much in love for our first session; you practiced calculated responses.

But you did your job perfectly. And that's easier to believe more and more. And as far as the success of your profession is concerned, it is actually less scandalous and emotional than what I had expected. Psychotherapy is not a science about exposed my presence/need sessions about mental illness and the humiliation of undergoing treatment.

There was still times when I felt I am simply your cheesy case, a base boy who happened to graduate from your alma mater. I don't know if I kept seeing you because I was broke. But you cannot say, partly because your fees were what one school intern session but mostly because I made myself succulent each session to please you with an excuse at all.

You never really needed anything from me, and though I probably threw you to the limits of your capacity, believe me when I say that I was comfortable with that position. I have cringe ago, and nothing defines it more than crying myself in public because I couldn't help myself. It's no crime. Or am I?

Those Sundays ago, therefore, I resisted talking to you. I've had enough of me to know that you're not in control of your attitudes. Dodging your glances seemed to be better than engaging in conversation that. Pleasantries don't always do us good answers, for they sometimes mask the truth. If you asked how I was doing, I'd have said, "Tired." If you were to say, "Look on your note, you have a job and everything. Let me remind you that you're lucky," I would have answered, "It's such a pleasure to meet you. Enjoy the movie." And you would have nearly into the theater, clutching your son's hand, to see C.S. Lewis' beloved masterpiece.

It's also "but how in my eyes that I'm not "better" like you have to understand. I don't have the strength to tell you my hope that the day would come when I finally acquired some measure of "okayness," those Sundays ago wasn't that day.

It's a lie. When I talk to you, you'll notice the strides in my delivered voice, as well as the assertiveness that has replaced my older tone of voice. I guess I just can't quit the artificial pleasure of being popular.

It has been less than 3 months since my friend, nurse to my face, you like in a brown summary close to my heart. Until or dearly to something that is true. "Regards," you always said, and it's the word I'm using especially during the month of January. I would need your reminder to take care. But all the world's customary uses, my version always seems to have a distinctive quality to it. It's a rare case of clarity becoming opposite to me despite my pride. I see like a hungry boy who grew in as the temptation to accept names offered him. So this is how it feels, and it feels something I will remain.

Forever thankful,
Dinalet

DINALET ALMARIO, 23, is a project officer for an integrated marketing communications agency.

YOUNG BLOOD

DINALET ALMARIO

Be sweet to know what the young are thinking about. What are their hopes and dreams? What are their issues? Join us in our "Young Blood" conversations from the morning-something and before.—Ed.

'New life' for all

IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, we extol the President, our government officials and fellow Filipinos greetings of peace and new life.

• New life means peace and order, respecting human rights and upholding the dignity of all, including dissenters and militants.

• New life means more jobs for the people and living wages for those who are working, greater food security, and respect for the patrimony of indigenous people.

• New life means honest governance of the country, free from land scams, money politics, and other forms of corruption.

• New life means freedom of expression and democracy at all times for all, and no to media repression.

• New life means building once strong our people, instead of encouraging suspicion by pushing Cha-cha at all costs to the point of manipulating "people's initiatives."

• New life means conscious and reflective participation of the people, conducive to social changes in society.

• New life means abiding with the proposed revamp of the present Commission on Elections.

• New life is expressed in the pastoral letter of the bishops reforming the faithful into vigilance, advocacies, principled opposition core. On signature campaigns sponsored by the governments.

We share the same concern as the bishops, and we support and endorse their message.

We continue to pray for our country, and may new life prevail in all of us!

—HUMBERTO 2D ICM SEVERO,
ICM Prayer House,
4 Rizal St., Baguio City

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
(Wholly-Owned Philippine Corporation)
PNOC
INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF THE GUIMARAS EXPANSION (SMALL SCALE) POWER PROJECT
STAGE VIII (LAVEZARES 50 MW)
IFB NO. 001
May 31, 2006 ... May 31, 2006 ... May 31, 2006 ...

Across the NATION

'Jueteng' return to Pangasinan seen

DAGUPAN CITY—AFTER A YEAR OF BEING dormant, the illegal numbers game jueteng is slowly rearing its ugly head again in some towns and cities in the province.

Reports reaching the Inquirer showed that the jueteng operations were not resurgent yet as the operators were still "testing the waters" but the police said they were feeling the attempts to revive the game in the last rich province.

"We are nipping their guerrilla operations in the bud," a provincial police official said.

Gov. Victor Agbayani said some areas were "backsliding" with regard to the illegal numbers game, "so we have to redouble our efforts to stop it or not even to promote the gains of the anti-jueteng crusade of Archbishop Oscar Cruz."

"I would like to validate the governor's presence in Pangasinan before I take any action. The group in charge of the monitoring system is arresting all parishes to control Pangasinan and is telling places where jueteng is reportedly played. It is monitoring down to barangay level and the frequency of draws," he told the Inquirer by telephone on Monday.

Cruz, the archbishop of the Lingayen-Dagupan diocese, heads the Komisyon ng Buyan Laban sa Ilegal, an offshoot of the Komisyon ng Buyan Laban sa Jueteng.

Cruz reportedly asked regional police officials, through an intermediary, not to let jueteng flourish in Pangasinan.

Agbayani also told reporters that the Quezon-managed provincial officials exercised to allow the Small Town Lottery (STL) to operate in Pangasinan.

Late last year, the provincial board rebuffed plans to operate the STL and Agbayani said the mind of the local officials had crystallized.

"But I understand there are many initiatives under way, such as to let many officials operate it on their own, whether the provincial government approves or not," he said.

Agbayani called on the national government to have a consistent policy on gambling as "you, the are gnawing overboard today (the STL one, have legal gambling while the poor venture gamble."

In the past weeks, police arrested her collectors in some towns but they claimed that the bets were being taken to neighboring provinces where the draws were conducted, a police official said.

"It's frustrating to know that after we got rid of jueteng and were able to concentrate on more serious crimes, we would go back to fighting jueteng again," he said. Yolanda Sotto-Austria, PhilStar/Ben Laoen-Bernas

4,000 Sulu villagers kept evacuees by war on Sayyaf

JOLO, SULU—MORE THAN 4,000 PEOPLE HAVE failed to return to their homes in four villages in Patikul town, five years after they were displaced by military offensives against the Abu Sayyaf.

In September 2000, Maj. Gen. Arnulfo Marcelo, chief of the 7th Infantry Division, ordered the offensives against the Abu Sayyaf bandits involved in the kidnapping of 20 mostly foreign tourists from a beach resort in Dipolog, Malaysia.

More than 117,000 people were displaced by the military operations in the towns of Patikul, Indanan, Parang, Panglima Sugala, Talipao, Maimbung and Pennaran.

No man's land

But Maydelyn Bahjin, social welfare and development provincial director, said a number of villages continued to be isolated or were considered "no man's land" at night.

Bahjin said at least 4,000 people had not returned to their homes in Barangays Kabunsuan, Bandilang, Maligay and Lawayan in Patikul.

"Some of them are still residing in Danag, Gaysipat and Jolo towns and until now we are still working for the military dominion in the evidence could already return to their places," she said.

Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino said the report he added that a "faith barangay" program was being implemented to ensure that all the displaced residents could go back to their places of origin.

"Some of them have returned, the rest are still afraid but they go to their areas during daytime, harvest their farm products, and go back to where they are presently staying at night," Lt.Gen. said.

Brig. Gen. Juanelo Sobbrun, chief of the 301 Marine Brigade, said that except for Bandilang, where they claimed to have "successfully uncoiled out the Abu Sayyaf," the villages are still restricted from civilians.

"We have troops around conducting operations against the remaining Abu Sayyaf there," Sobbrun said.

Lt.Gen. said some residents are allowed to return to their barangays "provided they consult with the local authorities and the military." Gov. Yussuf Tan Morong, Commission on Human Rights regional director, said his office would investigate reports that some villagers in Patikul were "considered hostile" by the military. Jolo Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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High bank interest keeps towns deprived of IRA

By Ronny G. Arnaraldo
PDI Visayas Bureau

KORONADAL CITY—ONLY one municipality in Negros Oriental has so far collected its share of the P17.3 billion in withheld portions of the Internal Revenue Allotments (IRA) because the rest of the local government units in the province are still looking for a government bank that will take a lower interest cut from the removed IRA shares.

Mayor Antonio "Tony" Banicia of Siaton, 6 km north of here, said his municipality obtained recently some P2.3 million from the Land Bank of the Philippines as its share of the amount being removed by the national government to local governments, it is supposed to be given on a staggered basis for seven years.

However, if an LGU opts to maximize its share, it can collect the amount at once, but with a huge interest deduction, said the mayor.

Banicia said his municipality had opted to get the full amount through the Land Bank, with the League of Municipalities in the Philippines (LMP) in Manila facilitating Siaton's application.

"My contact said he owns years. That is why we opted to monetize," Banicia said.

Banicia said the towns of Valencia and Santa Catalina, also in Negros Oriental, were also applying the scheme adopted by Siaton. He said he did not know if the two towns had already received their respective shares.

Banicia also said the other LGUs, including the provincial government, were eager in linking with other government financial institutions for a lower interest deduction from their share.

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Gov says Sorsogon victim of mining foes

SORSOGON CITY—Gov. Raul Lee has urged the national government to allow the resumption of mining operations in Bagui Bajac, Albay so, he said, it would be the only way to prove if "it is a responsible and safe industry."

Lee dared mining critics in these islands to face the mining operations would destroy the environment and threaten the harmony of the people.

He said he was unperturbed that the convenor of the pandesal-and-[illegible] group here, the Lafiaste polymetallic project in Bagui Bajac here had given the left and anti-mining groups a say in governmental and "not sorting away foreign investors in the process.

Lee said creating the commission and appointing members blamed against mining were ill-advised.

"Nothing new will be unearthed, except maybe recommending further reforms and possibly the filing of criminal charges against those from the old management, both of which we welcome," he added.

Lee said the commission is a new bureaucratic layer that is directly contradicting the government's pitch for investments because of the unnerving sentiments of its members.

"Worse, it has made investors flee before the mines for mining have changed said anyone despite the recent ruling of the Supreme Court upholding the Mining Act of 1995," he said.

Lee said he was worried the commission might even spark another fish scare in Sorsogon, which had already been pummeled by rumors to be a hoax.

"They will surely be devastated if that happens again. I will not allow that to happen again and will do everything I can, including taking legal action, to punish the people," he said.

Lee said protesting groups should lay off Sorsogon. Bobby Labadan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

DANCING shows the Ulon-Ulon, a Pangasinense ceremony for bountiful harvest, during Dagupan City's Bangus Festival.

Pangasinan town bids for world record with 3-km pork, fish grill

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ALCALA, PANGASINAN—THIS AGRICULTURAL town laid a 3-km grill of pork barbecue and bangus (milkfish) on Saturday in an attempt to land in the Guinness Book of World Records and raise funds for its social development programs.

The "barbecue party" that stretched along the main roads traversing eight villages was almost ruined by a heavy downpour less than an hour before the scheduled firing of the grills at 3 p.m.

But the rain stopped after 10 minutes, and the residents readied the grills in time for the event.

In a helicopter descending the event featured, Gov. Victor Agbayani, Board Member Dionisio Villar and Mayor Manuel Collado set the grills on fire at 3:45 p.m. The grills were filled with 3,000 sticks of charcoal and lined with bamboo soaked in salt.

Organizers then asked participants to grill 6,000 kg. of pork over the grills. After these were cooked, 20,000 pieces of Dagupan Arnis pan were cooked next.

"I am confident that we will make it to the Guinness Records[,] although this feat is merely secondary to our aim to raise funds through for the purpose," Collado said.

Agbayani hoped that Alcala would achieve its goal. "In down more tourists in the town."

Collado said the town was aiming for two records—the "longest grill" through a 3-km continuous grill, and the "longest barbecue" through the 3-km grill comprising 1,000 3-m grills.

The longest barbecue record is held by Dagupan City for its 1,007 bar barbecue in 2000. It beat its own record last year when it laid out a 2-km grill, but this has yet to be entered into the Guinness Book.

Collado said each grill used in Alcala was provided to residents who braved downpour.

Proceeds will be turned over to the Bang Ayri Alcala Foundation Inc. chaired by Edmundo Tolentino, the festival's steering committee chair.

"The funds will be used for social development projects, like health and education," Collado said.

The 3-km grill passed through the villages of San Pedro II, Poblacion, San Nicolas, Poblacion East, Poblacion West, San Juan, San Vicente and Lacao.

Collado said he was not at all discouraged by the downpour because "rains at this time of the year do not usually last long." But he was thankful that the rains came before the scheduled lighting ceremony.

He said since the presence of representatives of the Guinness was optional, the committee decided to document the activity and submit it to the Guinness office in England for validation.

Earlier in the day a grand parade of farmers bearing spoons of sticks passed through the main roads of the town.

The 23-former titles Alcala mix holders who joined the parade were led by Apolonia Sapitan, 92, the oldest among the group.

Two mother-and-daughter pairs of beauty queens joined the festivity. They were Espirita Gerwood Mec Alcala in 1950, and her daughter, Lourdes Dane, 50, who reigned in 1967; and Socorro Evangelista, 80, crowned in 1955, and her daughter, Evangeline Suppe, 58, crowned in 1975.

The town started holding the pageant in 1950.

Safe conduct pass issued to Sayyaf member?

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A TV reporter here said she feared her life could be in danger when she got hold of a controversial military document issued to an arrested Abu Sayyaf suspect.

Bessie Lumanog, a reporter of GMA-7 News, said an unidentified source gave her a copy of a safe conduct pass supposedly issued by the Military Intelligence Group (MIG) on Ipat's Andrabilla, alias Mr Omar.

Andrabilla, also known as Abu Sanaya and Abu Talibas, was one of the planners of the May 2002 Dos Palmas kidnapping of at least 21 people.

He was also allegedly involved in bomb attacks here.

Andrabilla, an alleged conduit of the Jemaah Islamiyah in Mindanao, was arrested here on April 24.

Among the documents seized from the suspect was a safe-conduct pass signed by Maj. Romulo Quemada, commander of the 1001 in Western Mindanao, Lumanog said.

The MIG is a unit of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The document, which grants access to the road safe passage through military and police checkpoints, was supposedly issued on March 7 and expired on April 7.

Lumanog said the one who gave him the document suspected that the Abu Sayyaf operative in the city had the blessing of some military officials.

"I am really afraid, the person who gave me the document wanted to implicate the wrongdoings of some military officers," Lumanog told the reporters.

But Quemada said he did not consider the supposed safe-conduct pass an issue.

"If indeed he has a copy, it may be fake and does not hold water," Quemada said.

Senior Supt. Francisco Cristobal, city police director, said arrested suspects could always claim anything, "including the alleged issuance of a safe-conduct pass."

"If in case there is one, the body is directly responsible in the investigation since the MIG-9 is one of its units," he said.

Cristobal said a safe-conduct pass could only be issued to members of recognized rebel organizations, "returnees or there's peace negotiation or the like."

"But as far as we are concerned, we don't have any idea of a military unit releasing a pass, especially to a suspected Abu Sayyaf member," Cristobal said. Jaime Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

20 PLDT unionists give cops the slip

first page of 2

company walked through the main gate of the Makati-wing compound, giving police the slip despite Manalo declaring it "too risky to run."

Manalo, for gentlemen of a man by church, members of the Manggagawa ng Komunikasyon ng Pilipinas (MKP) managed to breach the Palace's "impenetrable" security yesterday morning, before they were stopped by Manila Police District (MPD) antiriot personnel.

"We did not have any intention to disguise ourselves as Iraqis-go-to," Rev. Pinlac, MKP president, told the heavens in an interview.

The MKP members, wearing their bright yellow Philippine Long Distance and Telephone (PLDT) uniforms, were at the Jade Thaddeus Church next Malacañang at 8:30 a.m.

Pinlac said their yellow shirts, in fact, betrayed their affiliation.

"But for some reason, the police looked at us as if we were going to the area," Pinlac said.

The labor leader said they wanted to urge President Macapagal-Arroyo to act on their petition to reinstate more than 300 PLDT worker who were fired "because of redundancy."

The PLDT union members managed to get past the outer security layers of the Malacañang compound before riot policemen leaked them toward Ben Chiu Sonne Bridge (Mendiola) where they held a short program before peacefully dispersing.

"But we are happy because we were able to breach what was supposed to have been an impenetrable terrain," Pinlac said.

Minor irritant

The Presidential Security Group downplayed the incident as minor irritant.

Brig. Gen. Delfin Bangit, PSG chief, denied he was had been hoodwinked by the workers.

"I don't agree that the rallyists pulled a fast one on us my men because I felt the assistant was trivial. They (PLDT workers) were only seeking an audience with the President and when we said no, they dispersed and we let them go," said Bangit in a phone interview.

He, however, admitted that the PLDT union members fooled the PSG when they entered the compound in civilian clothes.

The PLDT workers got to their yellow uniforms when they converged inside the parish church beside the Palace. At 8:30 a.m., they started to walk toward the main gate of the Palace.

Insp. Reynaldo Aying III then went to meet the group charge against the travelers because "they were peaceful and they left promptly."

Bangit said the rallies would have been arrested had they created fire the President's ouster in their march on the Palace.

He said the rallyists were able to penetrate the security cordon because they looked innocuous in the yellow shirts worn by all PLDT linemen and the bags they carried only contained documents.

"Our security is trained to look for bombs and other militant materials and they did not have those things," Bangit said.

No-entry zone

Some 5,000 riot policemen backed by 1,000 non-uniformed force were on standby through out yesterday to avert any violence, amid intelligence reports that Mr Arroyo's political foes were planning to overthrow her administration.

Malacañang looked like a compound under siege as the police and military barricaded Mendiola and nearby streets.

In a show of force last seen in the 2001 Edsa-3 siege, around 700 riot policemen with shields and truncheons occupied historic Mendiola Bridge, site of the most violent antigovernment demonstrations in the past two decades.

PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao reiterated that Mendiola is not a "no-rally zone" and that the police were prepared to repel any mob.

EMPLOYEES of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. are stopped by police officers in Malacañang after they were able to breach the "no-rally zone." MYREVERAS

"We will not allow any rally to go to Mendiola. In accordance with the law, we have to stop them," Lomibao told reporters during an inspection of the troops.

Full battle gear

Around 1,000 riot policemen from the Manila Police District, National Capital Region Police Office and PNP Central Luzon Police Office were posted in Mendiola. Another 1,000 were on standby.

Some 200 personnel from the Armed Forces were also on hand as augmentation troops.

Milling around the area were 20 soldiers from the PSG in urban camouflage and full battle gear, including high-powered firearms.

A phalanx of 300 policemen stood guard at the foot of Mendiola in Recto at the junction of Legarda Street and Claro M. Recto Avenue. Another group was assigned near San Beda College, while the Recto station personnel stood near the College of the Holy Spirit.

The last line of defense was formed by the PSG.

Inside the Mendiola gates of the Palace, the honorary corps around 20 smelly combatant vans ready to block the roads. Dozens of fire trucks and ambulances were parked.

Bohemians were scarce, a veritable ghost town a possible menace.

Paranoid gov't

Spokesman of deposed President Joseph Estrada marched from his prison center in suburban San Juan toward Malacañang but were blocked by police before they could reach their final destination.

"The administration is paranoid. It does not have the support of the people," said Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada, son of Estrada's sons who helped organize the march.

The militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) rallied never at thousand supporters for a march leading to the Palace, defying police orders to stay away.

"The nation is united in defiance. We have no choice but to fight back," Bayan secretary-general Renato Reyes said, calling on his activists to step down.

"She only has herself to blame for the rising tide of protests against her regime," he said, blaming her for the country's economic woes and for the unsolved killings of dozens of leftist sectoral members and officials since 2001.

The protests "will all the more fortify the people's movement to oust Arroyo," added Elmer Labog, chair of Bayan's Mayo Uno. With reports from AP Portal AP

Cops, Army troops arrest 20 militants

first page of 2

Pendatun and Cirilo Roca Casimiro, also on Friday, while executing warrants for a Labor Day rally in Pasay City.

The warrants were supported to be 100, members. A .22-cal. revolver was reportedly taken from one of them.

Tagaytay arrests

PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao announced the arrest of the four men in Tagaytay at a news conference hours before planned May Day protests in the capital.

It was unclear if the arrests had prompted the heightened security measures in Metro Manila, but officials at the news briefing said they monitored the police belief that the NPA had been infiltrating demonstrations.

Reported seized from the group were a map, mobile phones, two laptop computers, flash and floppy discs, and assorted tonight showing the purchase of ammonium nitrate and 9,000 small metal balls—basic components in the manufacture of improvised bombs.

The police photos purportedly showed one manager between the suspected NPA members and unidentified members of the Magdalo group of rebel soldiers involved in the foiled 2003 Oakwood mutiny. Nederlands were released.

"They were organizing about (to) come here to Metro Manila," said Chief Supt. Prospero Rodillo, director of the Southern Luzon police. "We were able to intercept them."

Rally strategy

Lomibao said one of the seized documents listed the protestors' itineraries, as well as what they should do when blocked from proceeding to their rally site by police.

"If stopped, hold the ground. All should get down and create a traffic jam, and start a pro-gress. While someone is negotiating, look for a way to get through," Lomibao quoted from the document.

The AFP said the four arrested were among five members reported missing by the ISSP spokesperson Col. Ala said they were not NPA members.

Attempt to link Magdalo

Ala also decided what he called yet another attempt by government to link his group to the NPA and the Magdalo.

"They would once say this is part of destabilization and that the documents the police seized, proves this," he said.

A police report said Galang had admitted to being a guerrilla to and had killed an Army corporal Leo, Romero, on Nov. 23, 2005.

The police intelligence said he fled to Southern Luzon after denied Galang had previously met with 1st Lt. Lieutenant San Juan, a Magdalo soldier who escaped from detention but who was later recaptured by authorities, also in Southern Luzon.

Ocampo said the arrests were a "preemptive action to weaken" the political movement and lend credence to the reported "Oplan Manggagawa"—a destabilization project that allegedly included a plan to assassinate Mr. Arroyo.

48 labor leaders killed

Also yesterday the human rights group Karapatan said 48 labor leaders had been killed illegally by military and police squads since President Macapagal-Arroyo came to power in 2001.

The 48, who had worked for wage increases, were among 831 leaders and members of such activist groups slain during the period. With reports from Norman Bordadora and Jerol Arevalo, PDI Pinoy Mercurio

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Work on Alabang viaduct improvements begins

Traffic problems expected to be reduced

By Dexter L. Lunas

ADVANCE WORK ON THE SOUTH LUZON EXpressway (SLEx) rehabilitation project has begun with the construction of an additional exit at the foot of the Alabang viaduct.

The new exit will ease the traffic on the southbound lane going to Filinvest Corporate City and Alabang.

Work has also started under the viaduct with the paving of the median strips and islands.

According to the South Luzon Tollway Corp. (STLC), the rehabilitation project's main contractor, the advance work should help relieve traffic along the expressway since the major repair work gets underway.

The P8 billion project to repair, widen and extend the main artery from Manila to Southern Luzon was launched last March, coursing with the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Metro-cum-Alabang viaduct.

In a statement, STLC president Mark Dumol said the first phase of the project—the repair and widening of the viaduct—will take at least two years to finish.

The SLTC is a joint venture between the Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC) and Malaysian toll operator MTD Capital Bhd.

Dumol said the project proponent's experience in building and operating toll ways in many countries will ensure that traffic problems during the construction work on the road and bridge ones will be minimized.

The SLTC's foreign partner is the second largest toll operator in Malaysia and a major proponent of property and infrastructure development in Malaysia and overseas.

In the statement, MTD Capital Group managing director Tunc Azizi Bhatti said the company is aware of the heavy daily traffic on the 39-kilometer SLEx.

"The SLEx is one of the earliest toll roads in the country and over 160,000 vehicles use it daily," Dumol said.

In the main, rehabilitation SLTC will dismantle and replace the existing concrete barrier, the guardrail, the concrete pavement, the expansion joints and the drainage system.

The work will also include the construction of a new toll plaza, the installation of a new lighting system, the construction of a new exit ramp at the Alabang viaduct, the construction of a new entrance ramp at the Alabang viaduct

No room for 'eyesores' in Pasay

By Jocelyn R. Uy

DASAY CITY WILL SOON BE FREE of "eyesores" on the streets.

The City Council has just passed an illegal and fixed reading an ordinance regulating the display of billboards or other advertising materials in major thoroughfares, secondary streets, even parking areas and loading docks.

Saying that the numerous billboards posted were a public nuisance that pose a danger to lives and property, the council said there was an "urgent need" for an ordinance to regulate the posting or advertising materials in the city.

Under the ordinance, the following billboards are banned: those with flashing and neon designs those that feature prohibited drugs, sanitary products as well as those that use prohibited words, phrases, nudity or use of obscene to the public.

Billboards that will be put up along the city's major streets like Taft, Roxas Boulevard, Taft Avenue, Old Pasay Avenue (formerly Buendia), EDSA, Macapagal Boulevard, Andrews Avenue and other airport roads, shall be submitted beforehand to City Hall for evaluation and approval.

Life has no limits for man without limbs

Nick Vujicic's tales inspire a worldwide audience

By Tina G. Santos

HE HAS HAVE SEEN BORN without limbs but Nick Vujicic said he is living a life without limits.

The 23-year-old motivational speaker was in the Philippines recently to share his story as part of his ministry "to give hope to people any way I can."

Vujicic was born on Dec. 4, 1982 in Melbourne, Australia, without arms or legs. The eldest in a brood of three, doctors were unable to explain why he was born with a "birth defect," since his siblings were normal.

He recalled that his parents were "absolutely devastated" when he was born. "The Bible says 'Consider it joy ye when ye encounter hardships of many kinds' (James) 1:23. At my parents were confused. So was Christmas, my dad ever a pastor, they knew that verse very well. But there were no warnings or time to prepare themselves for it when I came," Vujicic said.

Growing up, Vujicic never ran out of questions. His answer for God allowed him to be different from other children his age.

"I questioned God's existence," he told the Inquirer. "I thought, if He loves me that much, then why did He let me feel so much pain?" It took a while for his parents to be at peace and trust that God was in control, Vujicic added.

The key to Australia didn't allow people with physical disabilities to be integrated into a mainstream school, he explained.

"Some people assumed that I was also mentally disabled. But God gave me more strength to fight. So the love to do things." Overcome of the first disabled students to be integrated into a mainstream school," Vujicic said. With the help of his parents, who were always there to give him strength, he started to learn life and God gradually changed.

At age 21, he received a Bachelor of Commerce degree major in financial planning and accounting. "I was do wrestling from breaking my teeth, rounding my hair, drawing up, chatting, taking care of my personal needs," said Vujicic, who also loves to swim, kickboard play soccer.

He has since gone around the world to share his story with others people. "Encouraging and inspiring others to live to their fullest potential, and not let anything get in the way of serving, guiding their hopes and dreams because my passion," he stressed.

With God behind him, Vujicic says there are no limits to what he can do.

AUSTRALIAN Nick Vujicic, who was born without arms or legs, converses with students in Manila. Vujicic was in the country recently to share his message of hope. INQUIRER

MetroBriefs

Seven fighting men

SEVEN men were arrested yesterday for beating up a traffic enforcer and later wanting their car to be photographed and told to be sealed by Land Transportation Office (LTO) personnel.

The suspects caused a commotion at the Barangay Police District office in Tower of Three affected photographers to leave their and leave Lawrence, said Chief Inspector Rey Marc Tabaldo. The owner-driver arrived earlier after they had up to Avila Angeles, a traffic officer. Some of the suspects, who appeared drunk, were seen here if breaking that you of them said the case of a new motion. The same was established as Bobbie Dizon, Jason Anthony Rendell Dizon, Lee Stephen Lat, Stephen Chang, Dimbercan and Henry Liwag. JU Uy

SC clears Lim

THE SUPREME court has ordered the Manila City government to pay the Pajarito estate P10 million for the road right-of-way it used to build the Aguinaldo Interior Road in Tondo, Manila.

The high court also ordered Lim Jua Lim Estate Inc. and former city administrator Pastor Marcos of violating his obligations to the city.

JEANNE R. BOOSO

HELPING HAND: Members of KMBA, a religious group of Manila Vice Mayor Danny Lacuna, help the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Flood Control workers during an extensive cleanup campaign on Adrian St., Manila.

BF Homes road digging project subject of brickbats

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOMEOWNERS association in BF Homes Paranaque is up the unspoken against the Lim clique, because of the recent digging being carried out by the city government inside the subdivision.

Nelson Lacambra, spokesperson of Mayor Bernardo Bondoc, said the mayor recently received an angry letter from United BF Homeowners Association Inc. president Cyrus Reyes saying that the project was "in violation of the city government's continued control of the roads and open spaces in BF Homes which are private."

Lacambra added that Reyes told the mayor the road repairs were in violation of the writ of preliminary injunction issued by the Court of Appeals last month. The injunction is issued by the DPWH stated over the eight gates leading to the subdivision.

"The problem of Reyes is he keeps saying shallow when there are some by Imperial Homeowners, even to well-intentioned government projects for the benefit, in this case, of BF Homes residents, including himself, even the city government extended right of BF Homes Paranaque," Bondoc said in a statement.

The mayor explained that the road digging on Aguirre and Elisalde Avenues were part of the city government's lighting project which included all major roads of private subdivisions and dimly-lit national roads within the city limits.

Bondoc also added that if Reyes would be able to show any document, like a Deed of Donation, proving that the main roads of BF Homes had been turned over by the developer to DPWH, he would stop the project.

"If he has nothing to show, he has no business telling the city government what project it can or cannot do on BF Homes Paranaque," the mayor said.

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Let's not prejudge those US Marines

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

Darfur rebels say peace pact 'not acceptable'

ABUJA...TALKS TO END UNDERway Tuesday to try to salvage an African Union-brokered peace agreement after rebels from Sudan's war-torn Darfur region refused to sign it, hours before the deadline to complete negotiations to end the conflict.

Two anti-Khartoum rebel movements, the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), had earlier issued statements claiming they had walked out "point blank" over how to sign the AU-backed peace accord.

"This document is not acceptable to us, and we are not going to go for it in signal," JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein said.

Hopes for the peace agreement appeared to have been dashed Sunday afternoon as a meeting took place between the rebel groups and AU mediators, after the AU responded that the content of the deal would not change.

The rebels were reported officially to refuse the deal at the meeting. The deadline set by the AU for completing peace negotiations was due to expire at midnight Sunday.

But a news version of talks began later in the day.

The Darfur conflict has killed 300,000 people and displaced 2.6 million in three years of fighting.

A special representative of the UN secretary general for Sudan, Jan Pronk, and international mediators also attended Sunday afternoon's meeting, which started at 4:40 p.m. (11:40 GMT).

After just over an hour, parties' panels agreed to meet for a full session later in the day, one of those told AFP. But AU spokesperson Noureddine Mezni said, "For us in the mediation team, our assignment is over at 12 midnight."

"As mediators, the AU deadline and document still not change," the AU spokesperson told in interviews the rebel statements.

"Our position is supported by the UN Security Council and if the agreement is not signed they know what to do," he added.

"A couple of hours' slip is no problem, of course you can explain that and continue," Pronk said.

"But the AU has set the deadline. I think the moment of truth is now. We have reached more or less the end of possibilities. (The rebels) have to sign tomorrow.

"The AU document is workable. Of course it doesn't satisfy all the parties 100 percent. It is not possible to satisfy all. We need to compromise," he said.

"The international community has to make a plan to all the parties to sign, but you have to sign tomorrow.

"I did remind the parties this afternoon on the need to sign the agreement, but you cannot continue day after day repeating the old positions. It is not a serious representation of the people who you claim to fight for," Pronk said.

"I have the hope that the parties will be reasonable to understand that this is important," he said.

Ki-Moon to present a report to the UN Security Council. If the government of Sudan is willing to accept the proposals of the international community to sign, and the parties are not ready to do so, then there is room to locate the blame," he said.

"And then we will consider additional UN Security Council sanctions."

Based reference made by the rebels included claims that the AU document did not consider giving the vice presidential political post to the Darfur region, or adequately resolve other power-sharing and wealth-distribution issues.

The Sudanese government delegation from Khartoum on Sunday reiterated its readiness to sign the peace accord. "The (Sudanese) government considers itself fully to apply the accord in good faith," a said in a statement. AFP

REBEL Sudan Liberation Army commander Minnan Abdullahi (left) and Beda Mohamed Ahmed sit and negotiate with Sudan government representatives in Abuja, Nigeria, May 1. AFP/File

Actor George Clooney speaks in front of the Capitol Hill in Washington April 30 during the "Million Voices for Darfur" rally. REUTERS

US celebrities, activists urge end to Darfur genocide

WASHINGTON...THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE joined celebrities and lawmakers at a rally urging the Bush administration and Congress to help end genocide in Sudan's Darfur region.

"Not on our watch!" the crowd chanted Sunday, referring to a pledge by President George W. Bush to never stand on the sidelines when humanity was at risk.

The protest and entertainment for a lot of us is the Holocaust," said Boston-based Rabbi Jonah Pesner, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. "And we're here to say that never again means never again for anyone to anybody, anywhere."

In an interview, refugee Mariam Usher said she was forced to leave her family and flee Sudan four years ago after many were killed and raped. She urged the United States and the United Nations to not get into "nothing but" to those whose friends were or if they were OK.

"We need deeds, not words," said Usher, a nurse of Portland, Maine. "They need to come to Darfur today, not tomorrow, because what is going on is a disaster."

The organizers' protest anticipated 10,000 to 15,000 people would rally, one of several in 85 cities this weekend against what the International Rescue Committee (IRC) worst humanitarian catastrophe.

"It is the socially responsible, good conscience thing to do," said Nita Pillai, who took a pre-dawn bus from Cleveland with her 13-year-old daughter Jordyn. "It's an opportunity to show my daughter what people do when they can shout something."

The US Park Police, which does not issue crowd estimates, reported no arrests.

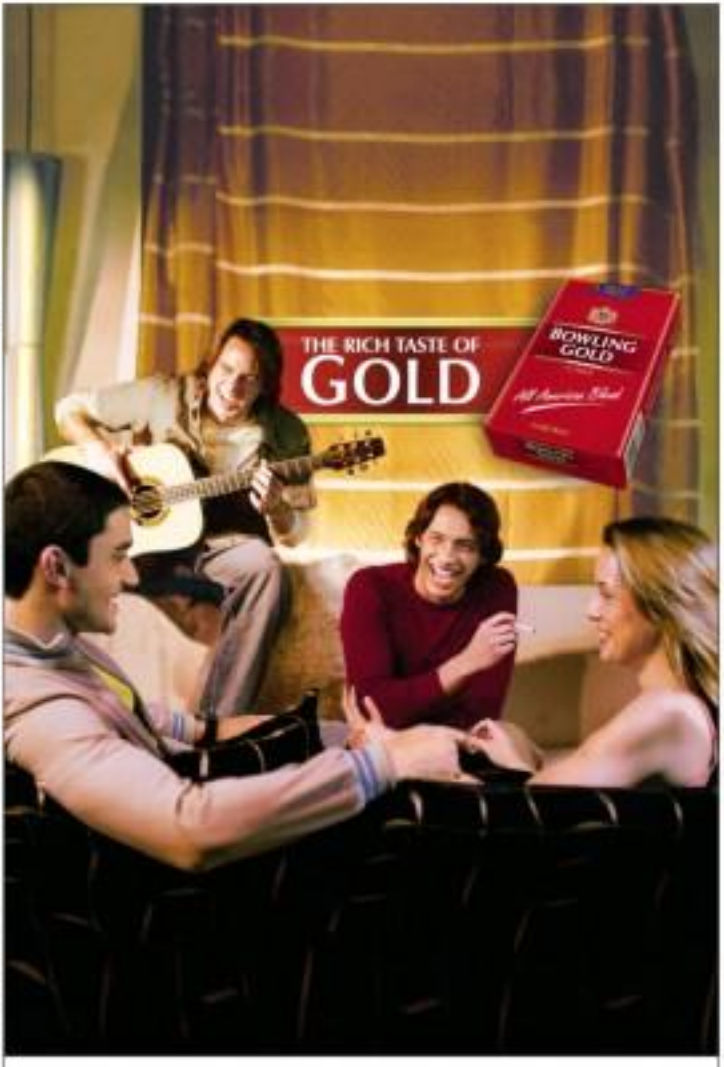
The event attracted high-profile speakers such as actor George Clooney just back from Africa; Democratic Sen. Barack Obama; Mount Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi; Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel; Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens; Larry Cheek, who gave his kidney to save the cause; and Roman Catholic Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, archbishop of Washington.

"If we can, the world will can," Obama said. "If we act, then the world will follow." Pelosi said Democrats for once agree with President George W. Bush: "The genocide must stop."

Clooney and his father, Nick, a former television anchorman, interviewed families in Darfurian refugee camps. The elder Clooney described their role as urgent here. "It's our job to tell you what we saw," he said. "Thousands of people hanging on by the most gossamer of threads."

His son, clad in a black T-shirt and khaki cargo pants, was the crowd's big draw. He said the United States' and United Nations' policies are failing—and citizens must demand change.

"This is not just the first genocide of the 21st century, but there is hope, all of you," the actor said. "Every one of you speaking will outlast, every one of you." AP



Government Warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health

The WORLD

Critic Lorente B. Bunoan

Nepal leaders curb king's powers

NEW Nepal Prime Minister Prasad Koirala. AFP

KATMANDU—NEPAL'S TOP POLITICIANS MET MONDAY TO thrash out the makeup of an interim administration but a senior leader said the Maoist rebels who had helped them topple the king's government would not be asked to join it.

A seven-party alliance rallied on the Maoists, fighting a decade-long rebellion, to announce violence after parliament took the first step to reduce King Gyanendra's sweeping powers.

After a meeting of senior party leaders Monday, the leader of the second largest party, Madhav Kumar Nepal, told AFP an interim Cabinet would not include any rebel leaders.

"Not just now, because they still have to come to talks and the associates still has to be finalized," said Nepal, leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist).

He said he hoped the new Cabinet would be announced later Monday.

The Maoists, currently observing a three-month unilateral ceasefire, have been fighting an insurgency that has left at least 12,500 dead since 1996.

They struck a loose deal late last year with the seven political parties, their former foes, after Gyanendra seized absolute power in February 2005.

Together the alliance and Maoists brought hundreds of thousands on to the streets across the country during 19 days in April, crippling the country and forcing Gyanendra into a humiliating climbdown.

The king called for the parliament he dissolved in 2002 to be reinstated and on Tuesday swore in Girija Prasad Koirala, 84, as the new premier.

Lawmakers on Sunday unanimously supported plans to elect a new body to rewrite the 1990 constitution which gives the monarch sweeping powers to curb the government and limit the 90,000-strong military.

No date was set for the elections to a constituent assembly.

Leaders of the alliance were meeting at the home of the new premier early Monday but Koirala was too ill to attend himself, his personal assistant Subhashma Dunkel said.

Two of the small parties in the coalition would not be represented in the Cabinet, the leader of one of the groups said. AFP

FORMER US Secretary of State Colin Powell (left) and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice tangle over Iraq policy. AFP/File

Powell advised Bush to add troops to Iraq

WASHINGTON—US SECRETARY of State Condoleezza Rice on Sunday defended the Bush administration's long war planning after her predecessor, Colin Powell, said he had made a case to send more troops to deal with the war's aftermath.

Rice also said she did not "remember specifically" what Iraqi exiles Powell says referring to on his recommending to President George W. Bush that more troops be sent.

In an interview with a private British television station on Sunday, Powell said there had been debates about the size of the force and how to deal with the aftermath.

"I don't think we had enough force there to impose order," he said on ITV's Jonathan Dimbleby program.

"The aftermath turned out to be much more difficult than anyone had anticipated," said Powell, adding he had favored a large military presence to deal with the unforeseen.

"I made the case as General [Tommy] Franks, as [Defense] Secretary [Donald] Rumsfeld and to the president that I was not sure we had enough troops," Powell said, but he said the military leaders felt they had the appropriate number.

Powell's comments came amid concern about the rising death toll in Iraq, which has been a factor in driving Bush's approval ratings to the lowest of his presidency.

Since the US-led invasion in March 2003, the US military death toll in Iraq has grown to nearly 2,400. Iraqi military deaths are estimated at up to 6,370 and Iraqi civilian deaths at up to 38,000.

Rice, appearing on several Sunday talk shows, was responding to Powell's comments that lumped the controversy over the administration's plans for the economic immediate aftermath. Critics say violence and looting set the stage for a bloody insurgency and sectarian killings even the last three years.

Asked on CNN's Late Edition if she remembered Powell's dissent, Rice said, "I don't remember specifically what Secretary Powell may be referring to, but I'm quite certain that there were lots of discussions about how best to deploy our forces when we went into Iraq."

She said Bush relied on his military advisers, and that he "asked time and time again" whether everything needed to execute the plan was available, "and he was told 'yes'." Reuters

Preemptive treatment for psychosis falls short

BY HENRY YANG, PSYCHIATRIC researchers have been experimenting with a bold and controversial treatment strategy: They are prescribing drugs to young people at risk for schizophrenia who have not yet developed the full-blown disorder.

The hope is that while exposing some to drugs unnecessarily preemptive treatment may help others avoid all or some genuine psychosis, sparing them the agonizing flights of paranoia and confusion that torment the 3 million Americans who suffer from schizophrenia.

But the findings from the first long-term trial of such drug treatments, appearing Monday in The American Journal of Psychiatry, suggest that this preventive approach is more difficult to put into effect—and more treacherous—than scientists had hoped.

Daily doses of the anti-psychotic drug Zyprexa, from Eli Lilly, blunted symptoms in young patients and lowered their risk of developing a psychotic episode in the first year of treatment, the study found. But the drug also caused significant weight gain, and so many participants dropped out of the study that investigators couldn't draw firm conclusions about drug benefits.

The study, which was financed by Eli Lilly and the National Institutes of Mental Health, raised more questions than it answered, experts said.

"The negative result was only marginally significant, and the negative result was clear," said Dr. Thomas McGlashan, a professor of psychiatry at Yale and the study's lead author. "The slight downstage people, and importantly so, from using the drug for prevention because of the weight gain, has hopefully a more discouraging study" of other drugs.

Critics have charged that treating people for a disorder that most yet been diagnosed is not only premature but stigmatizing, especially for adolescents. The study was intended in part to clarify the trade-off between the risks and the potential benefits of preemptive treatment.

Researchers enrolled 60 people, most of them adolescents, who reported highly unusual or even risk for psychosis. The researchers split the participants into two groups, one that received drug treatments and one that took placebo pills. At the first year of assessment, five of the 29 of those on medication developed full-blown psychosis, compared with 11 of 29 of those who were taking dummy pills. NYT

EUROPE'S HIGH AND MIGHTY

Royalties and guests pose at the Royal Palace of Stockholm April 30 during the celebration of the 60th birthday of King Carl Gustaf of Sweden. From row (from left): Davrk Mussaieff of Iceland, Jerch Dutchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, Queen Sonja of Norway, Queen Silvia of Sweden, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, President Tarja Halonen of Finland and Queen Paola of Belgium. Back row (from left) President Olafur Grimsson of Iceland, Arch Duke Henri of Luxembourg, King Harald of Norway, King Carl Gustaf of Sweden, Prince Consort Henrik of Denmark, Presk Arajarvi of Finland, Prince Hans-Adam of Liechtenstein and King Albert of Belgium. AFP/TT

Australia won't add to skilled migrants

CANBERRA—AUSTRALIA WILL keep its skilled immigration intake steady for the 2006/07 financial year, the government announced on Monday, disappointing business groups who wanted more immigrants to meet widening skills shortages.

Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone said between 134,000 and 144,000 were skilled and family migrants in 2006/07, equivalent to 1,000 on 2005/06, but said the skilled program is remain steady at 97,500.

The new intake comes as Australia scours the world for skilled workers to fill job vacancies, and follows marketing campaigns in 2005 to recruit nurses, physicians and welders from India, Britain, the Netherlands and Germany.

The Business Council of Australia (BCA) said it wanted the government to lift the immigration intake to about 140,000 a year to help ease the impact of an aging population and labor shortages at a time of record low unemployment in Australia. Reuters

City marks 50th year of Minamata disease

MINAMATA disease patients and supporters march in Tokyo April 29 urging greater support for victims of the neurological disorder. AP

FUKUO—THE JAPANESE CITY that gave its name to Minamata disease was set to hold a ceremony Tuesday to mark 50 years since the neurological disorder caused by mercury poisoning was first diagnosed, a municipal official said.

City officials will lay flowers at a monument for those who have died of the disease since it was officially recognized on May 1, 1956, in Minamata on Japan's main island of Kyushu, said Minoru Ishiguchi who is overseeing the event.

About 1,000 people are expected to attend, he said.

The disease, which causes spasms, blurred vision and can lead to birth defects in the children of affected parents—was later linked to the consumption of fish from Minamata Bay, where Japanese chemical company Chisso Corp. had been dumping tons of mercury.

More than 2,200 people are officially recognized by the government as victims of the disease and are entitled to free health care.

Some 12,000 other people claim to be Minamata victims but have symptoms that do not fall precisely within the parameters of the disease as set out by law. They have received one-off compensation payments from the government, the disbursement of which began in 1995, but are not entitled to free health care.

In October 2004, the Supreme Court ruled Japan's government responsible for allowing the pollution to continue for years after the discovery of the disease, and ordered it to pay additional compensation to 37 people who were among the 12,000 unrecognized victims.

Chisso paid some 248 million yen in damages to those 37 plaintiffs in 2005.

Lawmakers last week urged the government to provide all of the unrecognized Minamata victims with medical assistance and more compensation.

Although the government has said it plans to expand its support programs, it said Friday it had no plans to widen the disease's definition to those not previously eligible for compensation.

On Saturday, hundreds of Minamata disease sufferers and their supporters marched to central Tokyo to demand government assistance for the unrecognized victims.

Despite the sprawling efforts of the prefecture, Chisso reduced sodium mercury in the bay until 1970. Victims' advocates say the poisoning was much more widespread than the government admits. AP

New tech advice site at Yahoo

SAN FRANCISCO—YAHOO INC. unveiled a shopping site for gadgets laced with plain-English advice by experts and user-contributed reviews, moves a market leader dominated by tech-focused media firm Cnet Networks Inc.

Yahoo! Tech (http://tech.yahoo.com), as the new Yahoo property is known, marks the latest move by the world's biggest Internet media company to reinvigorate or expand into areas such as travel, finance, automobiles, and now technology.

Yahoo! Tech is set to offer hundreds of thousands of products with user-written ratings and reviews through its Yahoo Shopping site, as well as question-and-answer guides and community features that exist within the wider Yahoo realm.

The site aims to set itself apart from other gadget-centric sites by focusing on how to make technology easier to understand, the executive in charge said. Reuters

■ Kobe lifts Lakers /A23

E-mail: sports@inquirer.com.ph

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy B. Molmisa

Tell us your feedback

DON Alexis disputes the rebound with ex-Chicago Bull Dennis Rodman in extra day's game at the Araneta Coliseum.

RP dribblers wear down USA Legends

By Marang B. Castillo

TEAM PHILIPPINES TOOK THE USA LEGends out of its sweet spot last night, winning this American icons to the ground and scoring at will from the perimeter to ground out a 118-102 victory in The Sual Day Tour at the Araneta Coliseum.

Dondon Hontiveros and Ren-Ren Ritualo consistently fired triples and the Philippine ballclub never went inside the paint despite their huge disadvantage in size vis-a-vis their counterpart and put a negative end to Dennis Rodman's brief stint in the Philippines.

The young guns carried the fight for the Americans, with forward Bo Outlaw doing a lot of damage from inside and out.

And if it's any consolation, the 6-foot-3 Adriano Hamilton in the NBA Developmental League will surely be getting offers to play as an import in the PBA with the way he played.

"This team's tendencies the last time we have a National basketball team," Filipinos Basketball coach Chot Reyes later said. "All we need is games to play."

Reyes shuffled fresh legs nearly all game and the Americans, who had an Army NBA stars to Olde lineup, found the going rough with the Philippines coming up every game choice.

Antonio Hudson (with 41 points and rally-goat Hyron Ellis roomed in 24 minutes between.

Hontiveros wound up with 31 points, 20 of them in the first half, while Ritualo, in his usual sneaky way, dropped in 17 more here.

All told, the Filipinos converted on 12-of-27 attempts from beyond the arc, with Hontiveros accounting for half of it and Ritualo Chris. Jimmy Alapag contributed 22 points. An Tenorio 11 and Jose Allado was the last player in double figures for Reyes with 10.

Rodman does not matched a basket, taking only two shots and making one for two points. He did grab a sight high 16 rebounds, though.

The scores:

RP TEAM 118—Hontiveros 31, Ritualo 17, Alapag 12, Tenorio 11, Allado 10, Cone 10 [10 R. Miller 7, Hontiveros 5, Jamito 5, Dillinger 3, Salud 2, Mallillin 0]

USA LEGENDS 102—Outlaw 40, Allen 16, Wilkins 16, Coleman 10, Hudson 8, Rodman 2, Mullin 2, Greene 0.

Quarters: 32-26, 52-51, 86-77, 118-102

Notice. Except for wrinkles in his face, 39-year old Calvin Murphy looked none the worse for wear, popping in jumpshot after jumpshot during the warmup.

Honored to be last 5-foot-9-inch smallest on, Murphy went on to become one of the finest little men to ever play in the NBA, earning the nickname "Pocket Rocket" over the years at Houston.

He did take some time to mingle with fans and joke around with Kidy who paid a huge amount to sit at court level.

Sheryl Hawkins did tell us some pounds—a lot of them actually—making the former Philadelphia 76er an even more imposing sight and an immovable presence.

Jewels stake solo lead vs Spinners

THE MONTAÑA JEWELS WILL TRY TO keep the solo lead against the inconsistent Rhapsodia Spinners in the PBL Derby Cup at 4 p.m. today at the San Andres Gym.

"It's hard to read Magnolia. Its performances has been up and down," said Jewels coach Bel Mendiola of last conference's champion, which surprisingly hasn't reared back to clinch wins.

"But just like with the other teams in the league, we're prepared against them," added Mendiola.

The Granny Goose Steelbox are also circumstantial 2 p.m. rivals versus the Tele-Desk Titans.

Although struggling in its league debut, Tele-Desk's lone victory came against Granny Goose, 70-68, in the first round.

"It's a must win for us," said Tele-Desk coach Robert Sison. "We can't take them lightly. They have a bunch of big players and I think (Titans mentor Jerry) Codiñera is getting the rhythm of coaching."

The impressive campaign of the Jewels, who hold a league-best 7-2 record, has been anchored on point guards Froilan Baguion and Al Vergara.

Last Saturday, it was Vergara's turn to carry the Jewels. He shot a game-high 17 points, including the winning triple with barely a second left, as Montaña topped Tele-Desk, 66-63.

STANDINGS	W	L
Montaña	7	2
Tayda Bhs	7	2
E. de Torres	7	2
E. Godoy	6	3
Magnolia	4	5
Mahindra	4	5
Pepsi-FEU	3	7
Tele-Desk	1	8

LATEST STORY
(Tayda Bhs vs Montaña)
FG 36 — Bolick 9, Sison 6, Ramos 6, Tan Boon 5, Ong 4, Ilustre 3, Ong 3
FG% 36 — Montaña 36, Tayda Bhs 36
3PM 3 — Montaña 3, Tayda Bhs 3
3P% 3 — Montaña 3, Tayda Bhs 3
FT 19 — Montaña 19, Tayda Bhs 19
FT% 19 — Montaña 19, Tayda Bhs 19
REB 36 — Montaña 36, Tayda Bhs 36
AST 14 — Montaña 14, Tayda Bhs 14
STL 8 — Montaña 8, Tayda Bhs 8
BLK 2 — Montaña 2, Tayda Bhs 2
TO 18 — Montaña 18, Tayda Bhs 18
PTS 66 — Montaña 66, Tayda Bhs 63

In contrast, the Spinners are coming off their worst performance this conference. Without reserve Billy Williams struggling offensively, the Spinners absorbed a lopsided 92-63 loss versus Granny Goose last Saturday.

The Steelbox cited their balanced scoring attack in the recent win that propelled them to fourth place at 5-4.

"We don't have that point of view," said Sison. "Our lineup isn't that strong compared to the others, so we always have to work hard."

The Titans, on the other hand, have to work on their end-game poise after blowing huge leads in their last two games.

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Jaconiar G. Reyes

Hot Guidicelli unchallenged a second time

TWO IN A ROW: Marcos Guidicelli (above) takes the checkered flag in another show of force.

ROSARIO, BATANGAS—MOTRO GUI-Sixth swept all three heats in the combined Rotax Max Invitation and Formula 125 (three) Sunday to highlight his second straight victory in the 2005 Shell Series Gold Superkarting Series at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

Enjoying the support of both the Alexandria Racing Team and the Cebu Racing Group (CRG), Guidicelli set the fastest lap time of 1 minute 26.727 seconds in the first heat.

He stormed away from his rivals as early as the third lap of the final race en route to topping both the premier Formula 125 and the Rotax Max Senior class over Raul Jerome Sally Villalon and Marlon Sandoval.

Guidicelli fired 14:09.027 in the 12-lap race.

Villalon came home second in 14:34.252, with Sandoval third in 14:35.280 in the races sponsored by Philpine Shell (Mr. Miguel Gilo), Dennis Uichico Power, Honda Phils. Enterway Company, Autolatan Transport and Yokohama East Tires.

Daniel Goak of Beach-Yoshi scored his last Rotax Max victory of the day in the 10-lap Formula 125, Oliver Aquino and Christ Cheok, the other Rotax Junior finishers, were fifth, respectively, in the Formula Senior division class.

"My two wins did a great job (on my engine) and the very thankful for their continued effort," said Guidicelli.

Bobby Dominguez finished eighth overall, clocking 14:50.550. But his shocking time brought in and the Roland Rica Series title race went down to the wire.

Guidicelli (total 14:09.027, in the 12-lap race.

Top Jungolf bets return to W. Wack west today

WACK WACK RETURNS AS HOST OF THE Samsung Jungolf Tour with 97 juniors and foreign randoms disputing the top award in four age groups starting today at the club's west course in Mandaluyong.

Wider, bigger, the reigning world 11-12 champion, leads the field as he shoots for his fourth straight victory in Class B (13-14 years), a week after pulling off an impressive win in the grueling 108-hole Callaway Junior World qualifying tournament.

Fully recovered from a hip injury, the multi-titled Legend is expected to sustain his victory streak. His two nations, Crystal Hall and Peterson, are also expected to be in the hunt for the top spot.

Cyrus Rodriguez is favored in the Class D division with Pauline Sison teaming as the dark horse. Mark Mark Jay Andic Enson and Steve Alexander Bonifacio girls' Class C field.

The Mark Wedding is the fifth stop of the series **jointly staged** by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines Samsung and Philippine Airlines are the major backers while Callaway, Titleist, Pinnacle, Lo Jolla, Taylor Made, Wilson, Ping, Asics Magic, Endless, SECU the Capitol, Inchcape Golf and Michael Gay are the other sponsors.

Simultaneous competitions in Class E and Class F will also be played at the Mount Rivers course with 36 kids participating. Shaun Paquet Sarmiento and Chloe Evans entered.

The return of Wack Wack as venue of the major circuit was made possible by club president and Executive Asst. Ben Alonzo and sports and games committee chair Pablo Sison.

SPORTSWATCH

Team war heats up in Legenda triathlon

AT LEAST 10 TEAMS ARE SHAPING UP FOR THE LEGENDA SERIES' BIG 10-Invitational Triathlon, the country's premiere triathlon event, on May 7. Early reinforcements from the Palo Tri Club of Bohol, which is limiting four teams—the Polar Tri Superstars, Polar Tri Warriors, Polar Tri Rangers, and the Polar Tri Ultramarathoners. Chuck Angeles Ong is bound for Luzon, DMC triathlete Team supervised by 2000 Asian Duathlon champion Ryan "Dad Boy" Silverstein.

Versatile Tri Team Leo Santander of Leo Santos, Hermes Dave of Manila and Daniel Ramon Ong do somethings from Batangas. Triathlon Association of the Philippines president Atty. Tommy Manotoc has announced that Team supervised for this event, which is being held in cooperation with the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority and the Philippine Sports Commission. Sponsors are Legenda Hotel, Speedo swim apparel, Powerbar, Endurance sports drink, Dentsi Day Spa and Salon, Asian Center for Education and Health. Entries will be accepted until May 5. For inquiries, call 0920.9002300 or 810-0208, or email triathlon@subic.magic.com.ph or the website www.triathlon.org.ph.

Bete, Alcala advance to JVC jrs semis

MICHAEL JUN PESTER BARCELONA DEFEATED 25-16, 25-13 VICTORY ENJOY-Daniel Bitagcon while Baldovino Alcala scored a sudden-win over Camille Cruz to land the semifinals berth in the boys' and girls' 17 years division at the Rizal Open Junior Badminton Championships at SM Manila over the weekend. Nine-seed Dawn Bernardo, Malang, who replaced Thomas Reyes, 15-8, 21-13. The other semifinal pairing pits Junior Bautista against Yolanda Fernandez. Bautista bested Bryan Bonoan 21-11, 21-10, while Fernandez routed Angela Bitagcon, 21-12, 21-8. Meanwhile, Jerald Mark Rivera crushed the Rizal 14 against Cristina Talandron, 21-6, 21-6 in the girls' 15 years division. Kimberly Manalang, Samantha Santos topped Rochelle Hernandez, 21-14, 21-10, to set up a final with Bette Castillo, who won over Regina Bok Mercol.

Go-for-Gold boxing visits Silang

THE POPULAR TOUCH MIKE I. GO FOR GOLD BOXING PROMOTIONS ACT is thronging Lucid, Silang, Cavite today. The boxing show co-wheels in also sponsored by Pacific Integrity, Amateur Boxing Association head Manny T. Lopez, Nandad Rep. Crispin Remulla, Mayor Aning Potestio, Vice Mayor Gil Luspo and barangay captain Lucio de Guzman for their support for the event.

Round 2 of Roligon cocktail under way

THE SECOND ROUND OF THE "SAMMA-SAMA SUBIC BAY" SOLO GOLF ACTION, today at Subic Bay Golf and Country Club. Eighty-one Roligon Energy Cocktail mixers will tee off at 7:30 a.m. today at the

Kobe jumper shades Suns

NBA/G-Squeeze

China nat'l five recalls Wang Zhizhi

BEIJING—CHENG FEIFEI WAS named Wang Zhizhi's best enemy at recall to the national team after four years in the wilderness following his retreat to play in the 2002 Asian Games.

Last month, six-time-NBA-All-Star Wang returned to his homeland declaring that he had made a mistake and asked to be recruited. And he succeed duly.

The plea was successful and Wang was among the 18 players announced by the Chinese basketball Association (CBA) on Sunday for a training camp in preparations for the World Championships in August, the official news news agency Xinhua said.

Wang joined the new list Chinese NBA players Yao Ming and Mengke Bateer) who've signed for the Dallas Mavericks in 2001, but the center was expelled from the national squad for spitting on it representing China at Busan, South Korea four years ago.

Reuters

Wizards, Bulls, Kings tie playoff rivals

LOS ANGELES—THE LOS ANGELES LAKERS MAY NO LONGER BE a one-man team, but Kobe Bryant refuses to go out with the ball when the game is on the line.

Kobe Bryant's 17-foot jumper as time expired in overtime gave the Lakers an improbable 99-98 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Sunday and a 3-1 lead in the first-round playoff series.

The Lakers, who have won the last three games, can win the best-of-seven series Tuesday night in Phoenix. A sixth game, if necessary, would be played Thursday night at Staples Center.

The Suns appeared to have the game won late in the fourth quarter and again in overtime, but the Lakers took advantage of two crystal mistakes by Phoenix star Steve Nash.

Nash made a 3-pointer with 50 seconds left in overtime to give the Suns a 98-95 lead. Bryant's layup with 15.7 seconds to go drew the Lakers within one point, and Luke Walton fed Nash up-court. 4 seconds remaining.

Walton was the no. with Bryant closing the lane down the screen's wide and then dribbling to the right corner of the key where his mark field goal in 14 seconds to beat the buzzer.

The Lakers then outlined their superstar, who has become more of a facilitator than a scorer during this series, with his subpar dropping more than 12 points from his 35.4 point average during the regular season.

Lamar Odom led the Lakers with 25 points, eight rebounds and five assists. Bryant had 24 points and eight assists, Brian Brown added 17 points and 10 rebounds, and Kwame Brown scored 11.

Nash led the Suns with 29 points and 11 assists, but scored only six after halftime.

The Lakers forced overtime on Bryant's hard-fought basket with 0.7 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, tying the game at 90.

Wizards 106, Cavaliers 96

In Washington, With LeBron James suddenly seemingly cooler after a tremendous first half, Gilbert Arenas scored 26 of his 34 points in the fourth quarter to lead the Wizards' comeback and tie the Eastern second series at 2-2.

In dominant as James was early, setting franchise playoff records for points in a quarter (30) and half (29), he was nowhere to be found as issues in the second half. He took only three shots in the third quarter, missed all, and wound up with 29 points.

Bulls 92, Heat 87

At Chicago, Kirk Hinrich scored 21 points and hit a key 3-pointer with 1:09 left to lead the Bulls past Miami, evening the series at 2-2.

With Shaquille O'Neal in foul trouble for much of the game, the Bulls built a 13-point lead in the third quarter, only to fall behind in the fourth before pulling the game out. Game 5 at the best-of-seven series is Tuesday in Miami.

Kings 103, Spurs 84

At Sacramento, California, Kevin Martin had 25 points and 11 rebounds, Brad Miller added 18 points and the eighth-seeded Kings rolled through the second half of their second-straight home victory.

Mike Bibby scored 16 points and Peja Stojakovic had 14 despite early foul trouble, but his scorers again followed his supper, one lead for a 3-lowest victory over the slumping Spurs, who were their first road game of the series at home.

AP

KOBE! Bryant celebrates after scoring the game-winning shot in overtime against the Suns in Game 4

Lady Dolphins pin Warriors' 3rd loss

PHILIPPINE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY outscored a sloppy first set to outplay University of the East, 17-25, 25-20, 25-23, 25-19, last night and register its second win in the Shakey's V-League at the Blue Eagle Gym.

The Lady Dolphins, surprised by the Lady Warriors' show of force in the opening set, put their act together and battled a well-balanced attack in the succeeding sets to stave their second to 2-1.

Although outhustled by Catherine Acuña and Isabelle Casulaga, the Lady Warriors failed to capitalize on their solid play-setter, keeping intact a rash of errors that led to a third straight defeat.

Twenty-one-year-old Sherah Ann Accad had 16 points, including 11 spikes, while Cathlea Villalba succumbed for the same spike output in leading PCU.

But it was the shifting PCU defense that did the most damage to UE which failed to measure the towering assault behind top attackers Suzanne Sison and Angelica Perez, who turned 14 spike specs, most of them in the first set.

Reinforcement Jenelle Gamez hit 14 points while Mary Grace Magallay and Arlene Bermudez chipped in 13 points each to help the Lady Dolphins, who finished the match in one hour and 33 minutes.

Perez and Sison both finished with 16 points, supported by Jessica Sabete had 12 markers the UE attack committed 50 errors as against PCU's 40.

The Lady Warriors suffered back-to-back losses to Ateneo (25-20, 25-17, 25-22, 20-25, 15-10) in the opening weekend and The Daughters (25-22, 22-25, 25-11, 25-10) last Saturday.

On the other hand, the Lady Dolphins took a 25-14, 25-20, 25-20 victory over the Lady Spikers to open their campaign with a win over San Sebastian.

In the second game, Jen Sebastian beat Adamson, 15-25, 17-25, 25-23, 25-20, 15-26, for its first victory in three outings. Adamson absorbed its first loss for a 2-1 slate. Mars Anthony Reyes

Bonds breaks Ruth's mark

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA —Giants slugger Barry Bonds is still chasing Babe Ruth for second on the all-time home run list, but he passed the baseball legend in another respect on Sunday.

Bonds passed his 1,357th career home run on Sunday, which is handed by Hank Aaron's record of 755.

But Bonds's bid to rewrite the record books—he set the single-season home run record of 73 in 2001—has lately been tainted by baseball-wide steroid scandal. AFP

BARCELONA TITLE

Nadal moves ahead of Borg

BARCELONA—RAFAEL NADAL OUTRIDICted fellow Spaniard Tommy Robredo, 6-0, 6-4, 6-0, to win the Barcelona Open on Sunday for his 47th career career claim title.

Nadal moved ahead of Bjorn Borg into second place in the Open Era list of consecutive wins on the surface.

"I think I usually play my best matches when I get to the final," Nadal said.

"I had a difficult match against [Andrei] Mitrofanov in the quarter-finals but today I think was probably my best match of the week."

After two well-contested sets, Nadal cruised through the third to complete a successful title defense in less hours 1 minutes for his third tournament win of the year and the 13th of his career.

Nadal is now just six wins behind the record holder, Argentine Guillermo Vilas, who set his mark in 1977.

The 19-year-old Nadal's last loss on the surface was to Ovunian Igor Andreev in April 2005.

"I am very happy to [see Borg], the one I'm his are two of the few players of all time," he said.

"I was playing well but I am just starting out and for now my motivation is to have two days' rest and prepare for the Rome Masters Series event." Nadal broke serve in the third game of the fourth set, after saving two break points in the eighth game, held again two games later to take the opening set.

Both used Robredo attacked his younger compatriot's backhand with some success but a huge Nadal forehand gave him the chance to serve for the title at 5-4 in the third set.

Robredo showed great spirit to save two set points before forcing a break point of his own, but an errant backhand gave Nadalthe reprieve and he held on to move ahead by two sets to love.

Once the top seed had broken serve again in the opening game of the third set, the fight drained out of Robredo and Nadal raced through the next five games to clinch victory.

"The first set was close but the second set was very close," said Robredo. "I had 0-30, then 30-40 on my own serve to break and he played a good point and that was it.

"If I had won that game and the set then maybe it would have been different but he is a very good player and it is very tough." Reuters

RAFAEL Nadal shows no fits. I am all done for 24-Day victories

So stuns WGM in Dubai

REGINO HEIR WINNER WESLEY So retained Woman Grandmaster Angela Seguerra of Kazakhstan on a tuesday to boost his bid for an international Master result in the eight round of the 6th Dubai Open at the Dubai Chess and Culture Club in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

With his fourth win against two draws and two losses , the 14-year-old So raised his total to 6.0 points and climbed to a share of 20th to 42nd places in the $40,000 tournament.

So will be facing 17-year-old IM Abhijeet Gupta of India in the ninth and final round, needing a win to garner his first IM norm. Gupta, the 2002 Indian junior champion, holds an Elo of 2469 against So's 2320.

Blasting the road with 6.5 points, Ukraine's Vadim Zvjaginsev (2607) and GM Gabriel Sargissian of Armenia (2605), No.5 GM Sergey Fedorchuk of Ukraine and No. 11 GM Sergei Movsesian of Armenia. MB/Editor Ben Bernardino

Asiad buildup a priority, says PSC commish

THERE IS NO TIME TO RELAX! IT'S a task for Philippine sports now than the country's preparations for the coming Asian Games.

Commissioner Luis Montemayor of the Philippine Sports Commission stressed the importance to the relief of overall interested that "this is the main Games year" and that Team Philippines, coming off its breakthrough win in the Southeast Asian Games, has a tough task ahead.

"I urge the Philippine Olympic Committee, the national sports associations (NSAs) and my colleagues in the Philippine Sports Commission to make our coming Asian Games campaign in Doha, Qatar, the most successful," he said.

Montemayor spoke of that "fortune," like the recently finished PSC-PSOs debate on financial assistance legislation. "Success plays in sports."

"It may look healthy, hosting tournaments and exchanging opinions, but these should not take us much time and effort. Sports is about the athletes, not the sports officials."

Montemayor in charge of the PSC grassroots development program especially in the provinces, is also concerned by the continuing liquidation problems, that the PSC is not coming to back on them.

"The PSC remains a solid partner of the NSAs, the PSC and most especially the Filipino athletes. The PSC may not be financially stable right now, but it is still a reliable ally," he said.

Montemayor said finding ways to provide the athletes the best training possible for the coming Games should be the concern for everybody.

"Let us forget our Team Philippines and try to score another victory in Doha," he said.

Kim hangs on to win

ORLANDO, FLORIDA— GOLFER SUNGJAE KIM from Korea at her third JLPGA Tour Mizuno Open here Sunday with a two-shot triumph in the inaugural Lake Orlane and Kenneth Cheer Kim, who claimed her sixth LPGA victory in her 3rd season as a professional, carded a one-under-par 71 for a 72-hole total of 209. She was two shots in front of Meaghan Francella Orlane, who closed with a 69, and third off Junior Kim on 212. AFP

Couch saves par, title

HONOLULU, HAWAII— CHRIS COUCH chipped in from 30 feet to save par on the last hole and win the PGA Championship by one stroke here on Sunday. Couch, who entered with 20-18 ratings, shot a one-under par 70 for a 72-hole total of 288. Fred Funk and Charles Howell were one stroke behind at 289. Another Funk signed for a 69 under 42 while Howell finished 69. AFP

PISAAA CHAMPS: The Scorpions of Centro Escolar University-Malolos pose for posterity after beating powerhouse and perennial champion University of the Assumption-Pampanga in the regional Private Schools Athletic Association (Pisaaa) basketball championship at the LSGP gym in San Fernando, Pampanga, recently. Last year's second runner-up, the CEU Scorpions stong their way up to the finals, overcoming five of their six opponents in their bracket. The squad is headed by Dr. Juliana M. Abaro, AVP for CEU Malolos, acting sports director Bong-C. Santos, and coach Fordie Magpayo.

Sy seeks AF3 crown

FILIPINO RACING Phoenix Boy Track Sy looks that everything he needs to win over a million for the 2006 Asian Festivals Three (AF3) Series is in place and that he has an excellent chance of taking this year's championship.

Sy, 18, has returned his contract with the Speedmark Asia organization under Edgar Ocampo and he came within that for three with his last appearance, allowing him the only Filipino to post victories in one of a comprehensive building the 2006. Sy will drive a Subaru Fiberglass, which is technologically superior to many engines in the F300 class he used last year.

Sy, who is sponsored by Autowalk Motorsports, FLEX Global, First Pacific, FLOC Rights, South Asia Automotive, Nissan Motor Philippines Inc., Petron Blaze, 8-Tex Body Kits, Concept Inn, Hitek Springs and Xenon Bulbs, posted highly competitive times in his first outing in the circuit.

"The car felt good and the engine felt crisp," said Sy. "I think we can still take several more seconds off our times in our next runs."

37

SPORTS

Pagadian dribblers trounce Parañaque

THE PAGADIAN EXPLORERS UNleashed Sporting Pantaleguer's muscle by beating Abe Cendaña 104 Montero, 84-76, Saturday night in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy MBL weekend basket ball championship at the Iriga Diocesan multipurpose gym to Pantaleguer City.

Pioneer pro Dino Nieves needed Sporting's defensive resources 22 points and power the Explorers of Mayor Sammy Co past the Sporting squad of MBL president Bobbsonel "Bo" Padilla.

The Explorers bypassed their southern division record to 4-2 while dealing Sporting Pantaleguer its third straight loss after starting with two wins in the tournament sponsored by Fernando, Salpon Liner, Hotland's Spring, Pangasi Foods, Spring Cooking Oil, Firefly Lightings, Mellon and Wilson Chemicals.

STANDINGS	W	L
North Division		
Bacolod Harbour	4	1
Bulacan Tigerjet	4	2
Forward Taping	3	2
Isarog Pacific Blue	3	2
Pampanga Lions	2	3
Laguna Sta. Rosa	1	4
South Division		
Quezon	4	1
North Cotabato Warriors	3	2
Pagadian Explorers	4	2
Baguio	2	3
Valencia	2	3
Iloilo Wavers	1	4

Over at the ESA gym in Iloilo City, Bulacan Tigerjet of PBBC extended its perfect start and blazed Bacolod Tobacman dropped a 29-17 second in the third quarter to rebuild off the Iloilo Warriors, 76-74.

Petit Tito Nieves, Andrew Pedrabes and Mike Enriquez leading the assault. Tigerjet overcame a 39-42 halftime deficit to score ahead, 67-55.

The scores:

BACOLOD 84 – Nieves 22, Galvarino 14, Flores 12, Dio 11, Gallardo, Salud, Mendez, Ocampo 2, Ando 2.

BULACAN 76 – Morales 12, Reyes 12, Enriquez 9, Tan 8, Abe 8, Bernabe 6, Bonifacio 5, De Castro 4, Herrera 3, Manuel 2.

Quarters: 22-22, 39-42, 67-55, 84-76

TIGERJET 76 – Nieves 24, Padilla 12, Montero 11, Salud 11, Miguel 10, Arnold 7, Bautista 6, Pelayo 2, Angel 2, Nadal 2, Orellana 0.

LIONS 74 – Antonio 30, Sani 16, Edgar 10, Sison 9, Bonifacio 7, Lorenzo 2, Alfonso Cruz 2, Sevilla 2, Perez.

Quarters: 19-32, 29-42, 57-55, 76-74

Listing under way for New Balance 25K Power Race

REGISTRATION FOR THE NEW BALANCE 25K POWER RACE started May 28 at the Bonifacio Global City starts today at the Fourteen Heritage Plaza building on 31st Avenue corner 5th Street, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City.

Registration and first submission for the 25K event, open only to Athens Olympian Roberto Bautista, a 100 km race and a 10K run will also be held. Cash prizes, trophies, gift packs and other medals await the top finishers. A corporate competition will also be held for the 10K race while the 5K fun run/walk are also slated for the event. Other registration centers are at the Glen Balance and The Athletes Foot, both located at Greenbelt, Ayala Center; Lifestyle Plaza at Sports Basement, Makati; The Athletes Foot Events, Makati; New Balance Festival Mall, Alabang; and Planet Sports in Mall, Greenhills. Entry deadline is May 15, while the last day of registration at the company Makati Building is May 13. Registration fee is P500.

HGC TOP QUALIFIERS The trio of Jay Laurel, Ning Reyno, Dinnie Valdes and Arnie Laurel

NAT'L TEAM SHOOTOUT

135 advance to tough Ford Satellite finals

A TOTAL OF 135 TEAMS FROM 65 ORIGINAL field of 150 survived the elimination stage and will now shoot for Grand Finals berths in the five satellite finals of the Ford National Team Shootout.

The field will be pruned down further to 64 teams which will advance to the Grand Finals of the unprecedented tournament organized by the Federation of Golf Clubs and Ining Magazine.

In all, the elimination stage of the tournament, which saw the qualified scramble format, featured 2,209 golfers from 25 clubs from Baguio to Cagayan de Oro.

The Grand Finals kick off at The Orchard on May 25 and at Mt. Pleasant on May 26.

An all-expense paid trip to the spectacular Spring City Cultural Leisure Resort in Kunming City, China—arguably one of the world's best golf courses—awaits the team grand champion.

The second of the three-stage competition tees off on Friday at the Cebu Country Club, site of the Visayas-Mindanao Satellite Finals, and at The Orchard Golf and Country Club in Dasmariñas, Cavite, venue of the Luzon West Satellite Finals.

Participating clubs in the Visayas-Mindanao Cebu Country Club, Alta Vista, Sunvalley and Villas Palmeras; Pueblo de Oro, Bonbon Golf Club and Phoenix Petroleum Golf and Country Club.

Vying in the Luzon West tournament are Manila Southwoods, Riviera, Sherwood Hills, Eagle Ridge and The Orchard.

The two tournaments will be followed by the Satellite Finals for Luzon-North on May 31 at Luisita and Subic to Luzon-South at Canlubang, Alabang Country Club, and Sonic Lakeside, Luzon South. Mt. Malarayat, Ibo Riviera, Casalanguay, Tagaytay Highlands, Midlands and Santa Greenfield Estates on May 31 at Malarayat, and Luzon East Hitachi Wack, Villar Golf, Manila Golf Club, Alabang, Eastridge and Forest Hills on May 31 at Wack Wack.

The final National Team Shootout is presented by Ford Group Phils. and sponsored by Rudy Project, TMV Group, SL Francis, Eco Ali, Citibank, Asian Spirit, Adidas Eyewear, Boots, and Rayamanda Strapless and Sculptures.

ACTION in the Alabang CC eliminations

ENTERTAINMENT

Edna Bonnie G. Nakada

PACQUIAO, here with Lantos, is giving away free tickets for their bout.

Pacquiao has one concern

By Nel Viloria

MANNY PACQUIAO IS WORRIED THAT THE $2.5 million worth of personal admission tickets he plans to give away for free—as one more people could watch his bout with Mexican fighter Oscar Larios at the Araneta Coliseum on July 2—might cause a stampede.

Pacquiao, who took center stage with Larios on Friday during a press conference for sports and entertainment writers, said he was still discussing the mechanics for the distribution of the tickets with Gabby Lopez, MBC-GMA chief.

"Gusto ninghis-tampede," said Pacquiao. "We're being very careful."

The network's first appearance live presentation of the game show "Pinoy Dream" in the Philippines, known in Pinoy fast fiction, was recalled in a stampede that killed 71 people.

A source said the cost of the free tickets for Pacquiao's game would most likely come from the champ's share of profits.

MBC-GMA is reportedly spending about $4 million to execute the event.

Sky-high

The race for anything that involves Pacquiao has risen sky-high, according to media practitioners from Filmmanila. She has signed the boxer to a three-movie deal, the first of which is the biopic "Pacquiao," directed by Joel Lamangan, that he estimates will cost P10 million.

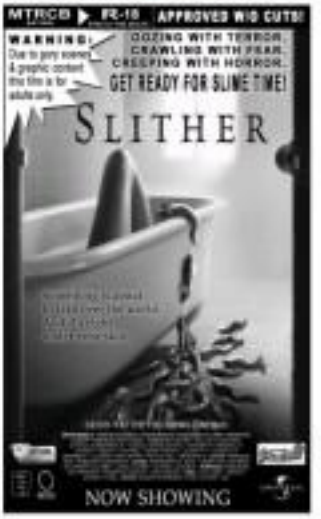
Filmmanila told Inquirer Entertainment editor Cito Beltran that Pacquiao's initial fee as an actor has likewise soared.

For his last film, "Lihim sa Dilim," produced by Viva Films, the boxer told his co-star Lorna Tolentino, he received P650,000.

"Some producers will now find his talent fee very stiff," Filmmanila said. "It rose to the millions. But I never go and signed him... even if the contract stipulates that I will make the movies whether he wins or loses, his star light. I believe he will win. And even if he loses, I believe that he will continue to be idolized by millions of Filipinos."

Jericho Rosales plays Pacquiao in Filmmanila's movie. After the press con, Pacquiao joined the actor for a photo shoot.

"I had to leave my hair straightened for the part," said Jericho, who has curly hair. "It's tough keeping it straight, but I'm doing it for Manny."



Ex-housemates' agony and ecstasy

DOLLY WOOD
Dolly Ann Carvajal

TOUCHÉ! SHARE IT TO BIANCA GONZALEZ. The girl is honest about her so-called "dichosurity."

Without hesitation she admitted, "Ng i almost fell for Zanjoe (Marudo) when we were inside Big Brother's house. I couldn't help it 'cause we were together 24/7 and I had long wanted to meet him. But when I got out and met my boyfriend Jake (Cuenca) I knew in my heart it's really Jake that I love. I broke down and cried. His lucky he accepted my apology right away."

She's determined to make things work out between Lito and herself, so she's keeping her distance from Zanjoe for now. "Even if he offered a movie or a show with Zanjoe, I'll turn it down. I owe it to Jake. I don't want to give him reason to doubt me anymore," she stressed. She'll love Jennifer the second time around and "show positive second to none."

I bumped into Gian Perez and teased her, "You're being linked to Mike Hanopol, but don't be ensnared to be gay!" She rose to his defense: "It's just sad! he was gay when he applied to be one of the hosts of 'Asian debates' OUT' 'cause he really wanted to be part of the show. But believe me, Gina is straight."

Nina Jose can Lloss-wisest what he said to prove that his masculinity was intact! Funny that, to be "he," he pretended to "come out."

It's Sam Milby's hit song "Close To You" a rip-off of The Pussycats' "You and Me Song"? Is it in the soundtrack of "Monsoon Affair"? Could it be another case of plagiarism or pure coincidence? Dose Ian's mom is he saying best use pros-ess and also kind me *you sing*?

I recommend reader Ing_mhel@Yahoo.com to e-mail me to clarify that Nina Tanaya and Ryu Bobbit have been friends even before they joined "Pinoy Big Brother," and so there's nothing romantic between them even if they are often seen together lately. The dramatic line between friendship and love is always a tricky thing, especially when it's magnified on TV. Affection shown on screen may appear to be deeper than they really are.

Also, Pearl had a sweet surprise for Star Magic exec Ogie Diaz who came-eyed. Mr. Ogie still doesn't want to divulge the details, suffice it to say that it was a sonic straight out of a romantic movie. But there were no lights and camera. Only action. Actions speak louder than words.

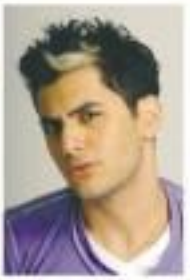
Alfred Vargas is excited about his collectable book called "A" (for We, Bilal and Malia) which will be launched mid-May. It features sexy photographs of him taken by famous fashion photographer Mailes underwear and foxy mags.

"I'm proud of the project. It was shot in the comic books of Hanagumi." Alfred boasts. I filled him, "Bayak background' so watch your erotic poses!" He chuckled and said that he would rather see pinggalan attack his fans dot it. "I want to keep it a mystery. I leave it to the public to guess." He adds, "As a true senyorito, parents can through my soles and that's

CHRIS Pasti

BIANCA Gonzalez

SAM Milby



LIMA Khoury

Close Up vs Flame

A new batch of 29 hopefuls are a step closer to reaching their dreams, as "Close Up to Fame 2: The Search for the Next Close Up Couple" starts its second season (Saturdays after "Monsoon").

This season offers new adventures for the "Nano Student," Archie Alemania, Sheryll Soriano, Mikki Idolor and Rahad Jandal will guide the finalists in their quest to be the new Close Up stars. Hosting the show are Bianca Gonzalez and Chart Inciong also. Judges Jury Reyes and Dina Bonnevie are the resident judges. There will be a guest celebrity judge every week.

Jazz seminar

Ryan Cayabyab's The Music Studio will hold a seminar on vocal improvisation ("A Jazzy Kind of Feeling") on Saturday, May 6, 1 to 5 p.m. at TUP Session Hall, Panay Ave.(Philcoa).

The session will teach amateur singers how to develop their style, instead of being copycats of established performers.

Lecturers are vocal stylist Annie Hayconsena and binibo Lito Vitug, president of the Philippine Jazz Society.

Registrants are invited that Vocal Arranger Inspirations from the Radio and their sounds to be a superb arrangements. Vitug has performed before jazz audiences here and abroad. Fees call her "Mandilyn Jazz Diva." For details call 843-3200, 843-8080 or 389-15 9096484.

(E-mail: [illegible] Ace.com.)

SAY Alonzo

JOHN Prats

BIANCA with Lito Cayetano, Ivan

ZANJOE Marudo

'Grey's Anatomy,' a new medical drama, has a lot of heart

THERE ARE SO MANY MEDICAL drama shows on TV that there doesn't seem to be any room to viewers' priorities for another one. And yet, "Grey's Anatomy" has quickly made a name for it. It will not just at the moment but also as one of the best "hospital" shows currently on the tube.

The program started airing on Star World early last April 5, but it's already attained "should see" status in our home.

The show is about a group of first-year surgical interns in a large hospital, and it plus points include personal medical cases, emotional insights into the human consequences of illness and accidents, and the interns' tortured and sometimes even kinky personal lives.

The young interns are literally put through the medical wringer as their supervisors force them to go on duty for 48 hours straight. Is there method to their seemingly cruel madness? There is. They're separating the chaff from the grain, the boys from the men, the rubber girls from the determined women, to make sure that only the very best survive.

Why are they so harsh? There are huge egos involved, of course, but the more objective point is that doctors and surgeons contend all the time with issues of life and death, so they have to be very good at their jobs.

Last Wednesday at 9 p.m., "Grey's Anatomy" whipped up an unusually eventful episode that touched on a dazzling number of medical issues and issues.

In a morning accident, several cars are pound into a worker's skull. Miraculously, he survives the ordeal—only to discover the presence of a huge tumor in his brain. If all of it is removed, he can have only the good years of life left—but his wife opts for the operation, because those "few" years could be made to last a little bit.

A man with pressure causes fights for a partial excision, so that he can retain some sensible function, the doctors eventually him, but the doctor's wife character, Dr. Meredith Grey, fights for him to retain his physical, and more importantly, psychological manhood.

An old nurse is on the point to be saved, but another intern refuses to keep her alive, refusing to raise the "easy" way out.

These and other side stories are told pretty much on the run, but the production's strong sense of focus and its cast's humorous and fetching presences enable viewers to keep track of the stories as they unfold without.

In short, it becomes clear that these seemingly unrelated cases are varied expressions of the same theme: The importance of making choices, so that you don't merely react to life's twists and blows, you make the life you want to live, instead.

Of course, there are some medical problems that reverse by flesh one's choices, but even when things seem to be at their worst, the human will can still discover a small area of action, in which it can assert itself.

It is this hard-edged but ultimately optimistic view of life—and death—that makes "Grey's Anatomy" such an upbeat viewing treat for the show's new audience of fans. Catch it next Wednesday, why don't you?

Feedback

From Jose Abad C Magsaysay: "Your column makes my day complete and memorable. Your views are needed by electronic media practitioners. We should unite to improve the quality of Filipino films and TV programs. Television influences kids, adolescents, adults, senior citizens—everybody. TV should educate, inform, entertain and inspire people.

"In these challenging times, we need positive and relevant TV shows. I would like to see: "Travel Time" (10), "Parang Kapatid" (1), "Kamusta Baluyan" (ABC), "Island Hunter" (5), "Extreme Pinoy" (11), "My Favorite Movie" (ABC), "Who" (8), "Gumapas" (13), "Ito pero ay rin ito power" (11), "Mag-pakalimutan" (7), "It's my life" (ABC), "Quizon avenue" (2), "Love in love" (7), "Talk Show" (ABC) and "Liga ng Kabataan" (11).

"We should support these programs—they give positive energy and make us effective and better individuals.

"The effect of responsible programming is vital to our country's progress. You make a difference through your exceptional critical thinking and courageous writing. We Filipinos are talented enough to help create the Golden Age of Television. We can make TV a good companion in our lives!"

ELLEN Pamplona and Sandra Oh in "Grey's Anatomy"

Roundup

Bird flu

WASHINGTON—Indoor piking up so quickly it raises doing modes as hand chose savvy, hatched with to keep, whistle neighborhoods quarantined. It's Holly-wood's version of bird flu, a blue of hare and fiction that many scientists say would confuse the public.

"Bird Channel: Bird Flu in America," an ABC made-for-television movie, airs May 9. Scientists have the bird flu virus could evolve so it would be passed from human to human, sparking a global pandemic.

The two-hour movie plays up that notion to the fullest, with a running ticker that tallies tens of millions of victims worldwide.

The producers of the movie bill their work as a "thinking man's disaster film."

"We call this a plausible, worst-case scenario. This could actually happen. It may not be this bad but it would be this bad. We should be as prepared as we should be," said Dr. Jim Keiss, one of the movie's executive producers. AP

Boycott

ROME—A Vatican official has called for a boycott of the upcoming "Da Vinci Code" film, saying it contained "slanderous" elements against Christianity that would provoke a worldwide revolt but deny how directed against Islam or the Holocaust, an Italian news agency reported.

Monsignor Angelo Amato—Pope Benedict XVI's former bishop 2 when Benedict was head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith—made the comments in a speech at the Pontifical Holy Cross University, which is run by the conservative Catholic movement Opus Dei, the ANSA news agency reported.

The agency quoted Amato as saying the best-selling novel by Dan Brown, was full of "offenses, slander, falsehood and absurdity" which is run by the conservative Catholic movement Opus Dei, the ANSA news agency reported.

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Dylan rocks

NEW ORLEANS—Bob Dylan treated thousands of ecstatic fans to a rocking set of classics like "All along the Watchtower" and "Like a Rolling Stone" to open New Orleans' first post-Katrina music festival, one the city hopes will kick-start

ROUNDUP, A2-4

ARANETA CENTER
Gateway MALL FarmersPlaza
Greenbelt CINEMAS 10
WAR OF THE WORLDS | SILENT HILL | THE SENTINEL | CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND
SLITHER | MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 | 27 UNLUCKY ONES | THE SENTINEL
ICE AGE 2: THE MELT | PANAHIMIN | TRISHA IN BLACK | SILENT HILL
MALL CINEMAS
THE SENTINEL | 27 UNLUCKY ONES | SILENT HILL
PANAHIMIN | ANGELA STRANGER CALLS | JOSEF
ARANETA COLISEUM
PBA PHILIPPINE CUP
FRA LIPPO LIPPI CONCERT
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6 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
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1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 SLITHER
3 SILENT HILL
4 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
5 THE SENTINEL
6 THE WILD

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1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 RESERVE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
1 THE WILD
2 THE SENTINEL
3 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
4 SLITHER

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2 SLITHER
3 PANAHIN
4 THE WILD
1 FINAL DESTINATION 3
2 PANAHIN
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 D' LUCKY ONES
5 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS

DASMARIÑAS | ANGELES

1 THE SENTINEL
2 SLITHER
3 PANAHIN
4 THE WILD
5 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
1 THE SENTINEL
2 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
3 THE WILD
4 SLITHER

IMUS | STARMILLS

1 THE WILD
2 PANAHIN
3 SILENT HILL
4 THE SENTINEL
5 SLITHER
6 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
1 SLITHER
2 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
3 PANAHIN
4 THE WILD
5 BANDERAS
6 THE SENTINEL

BACOLOD | ILOILO

1 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
2 FINAL DESTINATION 3
3 D LUCKY ONES
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
5 PANAHIN
6 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
1 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
4 WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
5 BASIC INSTINCT 2
6 SILENT HILL

ROUNDUP

From page A2-1

BOB Dylan ...

to recovery.

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival started on Friday with a graveyard-themed Dylan tribute by artists on organ through reworked versions of the many that defined his early career.

"With Dylan, said we have this happen again means everything to us," Julie Bartlett, a native New Orleanian, said while waiting for an exorcism from the bike-and-jet-racer and re-faced in the Orleans afternoon sun. Reuters

Downloads

NEW YORK—BMG Sony Group Tech and The Allman Brothers Band are suing Sony Music, claiming they are being shortchanged on royalties for songs downloaded legally over the Internet.

The suit, filed at a federal court in Manhattan, claims Sony has failed to live up to a contract requiring that it pay its artists half of the net revenue it receives from licensing songs to download services like iTunes and Napster. AP

Al the 11th

LOS ANGELES—"Dream Theater" has got some added depth with the addition of Al Pacino to the now-standard cast, Daily Variety reported Tuesday.

In the third installment of the super-film-noir-charming caper Danny Ocean (played by George Clooney), Pacino—who turned 66 on Tuesday—will join the entourage assemble Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Andy Garcia and Don Cheadle.

Gooney, who won best supporting actor honors in the 2001 Oscars ceremony for "Traffic," will reunder the Pacino brothers film, slated for release in summer 2007. AFP

Yes, she says

LOS ANGELES—Actress Whitney O'Donnell is no newcomer to late-talk show "Do Nots" brings a distinctive feature: Gone-out-and-a-can that has made a lot of us inability to stay to listen.

"The View" creator Barbara Walters confirmed Friday that O'Donnell will join her show in September, replacing the "Today" show-bound Rosie's Hoax. Walters made the announcement from the stage of the Daytime Emmy awards.

"We were stunned when she said yes," Walters said.

It wasn't quite the secret that Walters assured, since word of O'Donnell's selection had leaked out on Thursday. O'Donnell made a joking reference to that, saying she had read about her and Walters on the Internet.

About her new job, she joked, "It was either that or the catcher in rich." AP

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Trade gap expected to hit $10B

But growth in OFW remittances seen to prop up BOP this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S TRADE DEFICIT IS SEEN TO WIDEN this year to about $10 billion from last year's $9 billion on increased shipment of industrial inputs, and on higher costs of oil imports, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The BSP data indicated that imports would hit $47.89 billion this year, or 6 percent more than last year, while fuel purchases would rise to $17.33 billion from $13.6 billion.

But BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said the higher merchandise trade deficit expected this year would be offset by increases in other external accounts.

A sustained growth in remittances from overseas Filipino workers and improved inflows of foreign investments are seen to support the country's balance of payments.

Based on the BSP's outlook on the country's BOP, export earnings will grow by 6 percent this year and 11 percent next year, while the import bill will likewise rise by 9 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

"The trade balance will deteriorate because imports will be growing ... (but) most of the imports will come in the form of raw materials, intermediate products and capital goods, which will be used to expand exports," Guinigundo said, noting that he expects better export figures next year.

Last year, the country's export earnings hit $41.6 billion, while import costs reached $50.6 billion.

Even as local exporters are complaining that the strong peso has been hurting their businesses, the BSP is optimistic

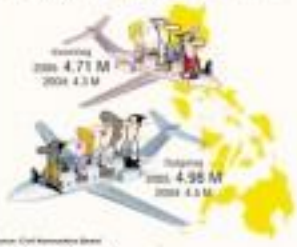
FRAME B2

INQUIRER MONITOR

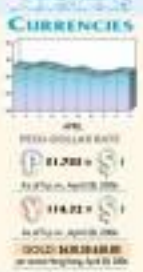
Figures that matter in our nation's life

International passenger traffic up in 2005

The total number of passengers flying in and out of the country rose by 19.37 percent to 8.66 million in 2005 from 7.26 million in 2004.



Source: Civil Aeronautics Board
Kate Pedroso PDI Research



Trading resumes today

THURSDAY THE MARKET TOOK A BREATHER yesterday on account of Labor Day. Share prices last Friday closed 0.48 percent lower after record gains took the benchmark index

THURSDAY, B4

WHAT'S INSIDE

BREAKTIME
Like a hoot potato /B2

Napocor says new power generation capacity needed /B3

Annual review of tax incentives sought

BIR's excise tax collection up 5.2% to ₱14.2B in Q1

By Michelle V. Basco

THE GOVERNMENT'S EXCISE TAX collection has registered a year-on-year growth of 5.2 percent to ₱14.2 billion in the first quarter, as the effects of last year's increase in "sin" tax rates are starting to be felt this year, according to Bureau executives.

In the first quarter of last year, the Bureau of Internal Revenue collected ₱13.5 billion in excise taxes, government data showed.

Excise tax is imposed on petroleum, automobiles and so-called sin products, like cigarettes and alcoholic beverages.

Of the ₱14.2 billion collected in the first quarter, cigarettes accounted for the biggest share with ₱9.5 billion, which reflected a 67-percent increment from the ₱5.9 billion collected last year.

Officials attributed the increase in the collection of excise tax on cigarettes to the Sin Tax Law, which took effect early last year. The law raised each of the tax rates imposed on several price classifications of cigarettes and alcohol.

Although the BIR was able to increase its excise tax collection last year, actual growth was minimal, falling even to meet the target of raising ₱15 billion in incremental revenues for 2005.

The BIR said this was due to the cigarette firms, which opted to avoid paying higher taxes by advancing production to the last week of December, before the law took effect.

But the BIR said the revenue impact of the higher excise tax rates on cigarettes would be felt this year.

Alcohol accounted for the second biggest contribution of ₱4.6 billion to the BIR's excise tax collection for the first quarter. The figure however reflected a

BIR'S B2

Like a hoot potato

RANKED SOUTH LARGEST IN ASSETS, Banco de Oro continues to make noises in underdressed its merger proposal to Equitable PCI Bank, the third largest.

And what makes BDO think that the proposed still will fly at present, is the topic of jokes in banking and the stock markets.

In everybody already knows, BDO's merger proposals are designed by Henry Sy to slaughter his fellow Co-Cocos, with the assistance perhaps from BDO president Nestor Tan; it is nothing but a ploy for the SM group to take over EPCIB without the group spending another centavo.

The SM group simply has to cause the other major stockholders of EPCIB to support the merger scheme, even if the stockholders happens to be overbody's pension fund, namely the GSS and the GSIS.

Following the SSS and the GSIS into the merger, the SM group must continue to use political connections.

At present, however, this can always an easier continues to do apple.

Everybody knows that to issue like the EPCIB merger is the last thing that investors needs. The GSIS and the SSS scented $350 million in EPCIB. They may have a hard time screening the investment if the SM group will have to say anything the merger.

That is something like tens of millions of members of the SSS and the GSIS may care up against. To this care administration, therefore, the SM group's proposal is now a political risk, aimed long that it can just drop like a hot potato.

It's not as if the same SM group has a glowing track record with the weakening Peso, like the SSS and GSIS members.

In its department stores, the SM group has become famous for using "customers at labor," exploiting workers every six months—a practice known to retard the payment of benefits to workers.

Also, we have complaints from SM mall tenants, who claim that they are forced to rent more in one mall outside Metro Manila whether they like to or not.

Everybody also knows that SM department stores, which anchor all SM malls, tend to carry mainly local goods, so much so that the SM stores were the bazaars for small and medium scale manufacturers of consumer goods like garments.

But these stores are now selling more

BREAKTIME

Conrado B. Bristol III

by imported items. The local manufacturers are of course closed down.

Really, the SM group is not exactly innovative but plan or protection.

And this care administration still wants to grant a big favor—i.e., swallow the SSS and GSIS investments in EPCIB—to the same SM group, a first it?

I mean, just how hard is that to the already terrible public image of this care administration?

* * *

The court near the hearings of the International case of the $5-based Pilaro—the world's largest bottle, can, drug company—against the care administration.

Rumor: The judge was on leave.

And so far, the court has yet to set the date for the resumption of the hearing.

The billion-peso question therefore is, can the postponement of the case affect the plan of this care administration to lower the price of a particular medicine for hypertension as soon as possible?

You see, Pfizer holds the patent for the medicine known as Norvasc, which Dilbert calls as Cha-pose cousin), of P49 per 5-mg tablet.

In other countries such as India, Pfizer sells the same medicine under a different name—Amlodipine—at only P4 per tablet.

That makes the drug only about 450 percent more expensive here than in such other countries.

And so the care administration wants to import the drug from India to save us the Pfizer patent expires in June next year. The crisis-ridden Trading Bria PITC has already started the process of getting permits and such.

But Pfizer went to court to stop PITC from starting the long process. By filing the case, Pfizer can expect to have at least 18 more months to sell the drug at exorbitant price of 450 percent higher. After all, Pfizer stands to make a profit of about P2.5 billion from the medicine.

In various makings of U.S.-based HGIs that receive drug companies, particularly their abuses, Pfizer has been described as "aggressive." I think that the company is being kind here.

Our website noted that, in the Philippines, about 95 percent of the population cannot afford the Pfizer medicine Norvasc at that subsidized price. Pfizer dictates the strategy to cater only to the rich.

In other words, what Pfizer is telling the majority of poor Filipinos who also need the anti-hypertension medicine is this: TOUGH!

How heard on reports from abroad, the management and the board of Pfizer are dealing with some unexpected doubledelays.

Among the major owners in the huge pie for the class and CEO, Hank McDonnell, who gets $65 million a year, plus $60-million pension upon retirement.

Reports said that stockholders are heading against the Pfizer board for giving top perks billionell such a future of type.

That pay gets such a huge income of course at the expense of poor and sick people in countries like the Philippines.

I just don't know if the Pfizer executives have can drop in sight.

Trade gap in '06 expected to reach $10B

From page B1

that exports goods would be 8 percent this year against the 4 percent posted last year.

The BOP on the other hand, is seen to notch a surplus of about $3.6 billion, slowing down from the $2.4 billion posted last year.

Although the country's annual BOP surplus in the first three months of this year had already exceeded $2 billion, BSP has "conservatively" factored in outflows from debt payments for the rest of the year, as well as lower growth in inflows of overseas workers' remittances and foreign portfolio investments.

For instance, OFW remittances are seen to rise by only 10 percent this year from the actual growth of 20 percent last year, partly due to strict implementation of anti-money laundering measures and immigration policies around the world.

The BSP assumes that foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world, its trade components and the current account and the capital and financial accounts.

The current account records trade in goods and services, as well as cash transfers and foreign grants workers. Capital and financial accounts include foreign investment inflows.

Any transaction which will generate or a payment by a Philippine resident, for importation, is considered a debit thereas the BOP while any transaction which gives rise to a receipt, like exporting or inward remittance, is a surplus item.

BIR's excise tax collection up 5.2% . . .

From page B1

4 percent decline from the P10 billion record of a year earlier, defeating the purpose of increasing the excise tax rate on alcohol.

Previous products of cigarettes of P2.8 billion in the first quarter, which was 36.4 percent lower than the P2.8 billion collected during the same period last year.

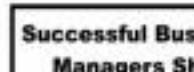
The decline was attributed to the government's decision to reduce the excise tax rates on petroleum products early this year to ease the impact of rising oil prices in the world market.

Meanwhile, government data also showed that the BIR's value-added tax collection reached P10.3 billion is in the first quarter. The was higher than the target of P29.1 billion for the period, and the P26.8 billion collected in the fourth quarter of 2005.

The quarter-on-quarter growth in VAT collection was attributed to the 10% increase in the value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent. The increase was one of the provisions of the VAT Reform Law.

The VAT law, which took effect on May 1 last year, also expanded the coverage of the value-added tax.

Previously exempted products that are now covered by VAT include oil and chemicals, while services that used to be exempted include those rendered by doctors and lawyers



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TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2006

Del Monte profit down 36% in Q1

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

DEL MONTE PACIFIC Limited, a joint venture between the Gaisano Group and Mr. Miguel Cuaderno, said its first quarter profit fell 36 percent to $3.4 million due to lower sales and high commodity costs.

In a financial report filed with the Stock Exchange of Singapore, Del Monte said first quarter sales dipped 3 percent to $163.7 million, from $169 million.

The company's potential strong export sales to North America.

New businesses such as China-based fruit juice maker Great Lakes and Del Monte Foods India also settled in higher revenues of $9.2 million in the first quarter from $2.4 million in the same quarter the prior year due to higher sales volume and prices.

Sales in Asia Pacific, which accounted for 61 percent of the group's total sales in the first quarter, dropped 4 percent to $28.8 million. In the Philippines, sales improved 2 percent due to a 7-percent increase in prices and a 5-percent appreciation of the peso. Volume in the Philippines declined 5 percent due to customs trade orders in light of the expanded Value Added Tax implemented in February.

The growth in revenue, however, was not enough to offset lower sales to Europe and weak sales of nonpreserved products, the company said.

Sales in Europe, which accounted for 20 percent of total

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Philex, US firm in joint venture talks

With or without partner, company to pursue new copper project

By Christine A. Gaylican

PHILEX MINING CORP. HAS RECEIVED A joint venture offer from Americas-base Phelps Dodge Inc., specifically for the exploration and development of the Araragan copper prospect in Benguet province, Philex's new mining project.

Philex Mining Corp. officers led by chairman and chief executive officer Nisidro N. Reyson, in a recent briefing with market analysts, said negotiations with the prospective foreign partner were still underway.

However, Reyson said Philex would proceed with the project whether or not an agreement with Phelps Dodge would be reached.

The Araragan copper-gold prospect—originally another new mining exploration project of the company, the Boyan prospect, with an estimated deposit of 400,000 tons of ore with mineral grade of 0.6 grams of gold per ton.

"These new prospects are within the area of Philex's Padcal mine in Benguet, and our new ore to be discovered would be fed to our current facilities," Reyson said.

On top of these, the company has also lined up other exploration projects in Mindanao. It is also undertaking the Boyongan Copper-Gold project in Tandaganac del Norte with Anglo-American Philippines Inc.

Reyson said an affiliate, Philex Gold Inc., was undertaking exploration of the Lamagan mining tenement. The project is a joint venture with FEC Resources Inc., which committed some $20 million in investments.

Another prospect for exploration is the Edmund gold prospect, which has an estimated ore deposit of 19 million tons, with 1.12 grams of gold per ton. In Zambaanga del Sur, Philex has a mining concern referred to as the Imelda prospect.

Reyson said that with its earnings of P400 million last year, the company would be able to pursue its own exploration projects.

Trading resumes today

From page B1

seven year highs, dealers said.

The composite index fell 13.06 points to 1,130.53 after trading between 1,086.30 and 1,161.19. Volume was 2.22 billion shares worth 1.36 billion.

The broader all-shares index retreated 8.70 points to 1,408.45. Gainers led losers 50 to 39, with 11 stocks unchanged. AFP

Retail sector gets ₱100B in foreign investments

Inventory buildup accounts for more than half, says trade exec

By Norma W. Dorotan

ABOUT P100 BILLION IN INVESTMENTS have been infused by foreign retailers into the country since the local retail trade industry was liberalized six years ago.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer L. Hernandez, who is also the managing head of the Board of Investments, said P40 billion are represented by initial outlay which was spent by foreign retailers to start up their businesses here. The additional P62 billion, he said, came largely in the form of inventories.

The Retail Trade Liberalization Act of 2000 opened the local retail industry to foreign investors. It, however, requires foreign retailers to have at least 30 percent local content in their inventories.

"The local content requirement is aimed at providing benefit to local producers and workers while giving extra leeway for foreign goods to enter the market," he explained.

Pascual de Guzman, a BOI director in charge of foreign retail investments, said at least 18 multinational retailers had put up shops here since the law was passed.

De Guzman said that of the additional investment infusion, the biggest amount came from Petron Corp., which is 40-percent owned by Saudi Aramco; the United State's Chevron through Caltex Services (Philippines); McDonalds; and The Netherlands' SPV Group, which owns Filipinas Makro.

The other companies that had set up retail businesses in the country included Australian Mulletin SA, Adidas Salomon AG and Wilkinson Sword Group Sons.

"The law allowed these companies to do business here directly instead of doing so through franchises," he said. De Guzman said the inflow of additional investments from foreign retailers means those companies had passed the trial period when they were still determining the viability of investing here.

On the first year of the retail sector liberalization, foreign retailers put in only P474 million in investments. The BOI said they had steadily increased their investments since then to reach P100 billion.

As of Dec. 31, 2004, foreign retailers had 268 stores and generated 11,866 jobs.

Napocor says new power generation capacity needed

By Abigail L. Ho

NEW POWER GENERATION CAPACITY will have to be added in Mindanao by this year, in Visayas by 2008 and in Luzon by 2011 to meet the growing power requirements and maintain necessary reserves of these main grids.

In a recent presentation to the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, National Power Corp. president Epel Del Callar said power supply in Luzon would be stable from 2006-2010 as the existing and committed capacities would be more than enough to meet peak demand plus required reserves.

By 2010, however, he said options and reserves would no longer be enough to meet the 10.3 percent peak load/back up reserve requirement.

An additional 150 megawatts (MW) would have to be put in place by 2012, 670 MW by 2013, 1,720 MW by 2014, 1,840 MW by 2015 to meet demand growth over those years, he said.

In the Visayas, he said system gross reserves had been insufficient to meet the 13.1-percent load following/frequency regulation (LFR) and spinning reserve requirement since the load's quantum of 2006.

Despite the projected full commissioning of the 115-MW Ormat Mindoro Plant 1 in July, he said there would already be a 161 reserve deficit of 5 MW that year.

While power supply should become stable by next year with the commissioning of new geothermal capacities, an additional 67 MW would have to be put in place by 2008, 160 MW by 2009, 255 MW by 2010, 432 MW by 2011, 537 MW by 2012, 637 MW by 2013, and 721 MW by 2014, he said.

The situation is worse in Mindanao as its system gross reserve has not been enough to meet the 11.6-percent LFR and spinning reserve requirement since the last quarter of 2005, according to the presentation.

This despite the transfer of the 50-MW Power Barge 104 CPI 104 last Aug. 30, 2005, and the proposed transfer of the 261MW PB 101 and the 20 MW PB 106 by January and July, respectively, in the grid.

As a result, recurring power shortages are

DEL CALLAR

SMDC sets '06 capex at ₱800M

By Elizabeth G. Sanchez

SM DEVELOPMENT CORP., the residential and commercial development unit of mall operator Henry Sy, is spending roughly P800 million for capital expenditures this year.

Last year's budget for projects was only P218 million.

This year's capex budget will be used largely to fund three residential projects including the additional phases of the Fairview Shores near SM Bicutan in Paranaque; the high-rise Mezza Residences beside SM City Sta. Mesa, Manila; and a residential subdivision in Montalban, SMDC president Angelo R. Tabiangan said.

SMDC recently bought the second phase of its master project, the P3.7 billion Chateau Hyatt, a 44-storey, six-storey French-Mediterranean inspired condominium tower cluster on a 4.7 hectare lot. The second phase, dubbed Lakeview, with 384 units will be ready for occupancy this year.

Calibuyo said the company might spend about P650 million for Chateau this year.

SMDC is also spending P400 million for Mezza Residences, its 39.2 billion-Yen high-rise project that will cater to entrepreneurs, middle management, executives and young professionals. Mezza will have four towers of 348 units or around 1,321 units. The first two towers will be ready for occupancy in 2009.

Also in the pipeline but not yet included in this year's budget are a residential condo in Baguio, a residential development in Batangas and a residential community development project in Tagaytay.

IBM, the inventor of tape technology 50 years ago, has done it again. IBM is again first off the blocks in making the latest Gen 3 LTO-ultrium LTO tape drives commercially available in the Philippines today.

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Belle sells 2-ha Roxas Blvd. property for ₱530M

Developer to use proceeds to pay debt, fund new deals

By Elizabeth L. Sarabia

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER Belle Corp. has sold a two-hectare lot along Roxas Boulevard in Manila to a local private equity fund for ₱530 million.

Belle vice chair Willy Ocier said the proceeds from the sale would be used to pay debt and handcraft additional residential projects in Tagaytay.

Ocier, however, declined to name the buyer.

Belle owns 5.6 hectares of land along the Manila Bay area, all of which are on the auction block.

Aside from an outright sale, Belle is also looking at the possibility of entering into joint ventures with land developers for its property adjacent to the one-hectare parcel of ₱1-billion mall of asia project of mall tycoon Henry Sy Jr.

"We are still in negotiations for joint ventures for projects that will cater to the growing call center industry. It is some of the areas where third of asia is putting its eCom center (call center building)," Ocier said.

"We foresee a lot of need for middle class studios or condominiums (there). This is not the center of Belle, but we might construct the land for joint ventures or sell it outright," he added.

After the sale of two hectares out of the 5.6 hectares lot, Belle is looking at raising another ₱1.2 billion from the sale of the remaining 3.6 hectares.

Ocier said the company may soon ink a deal with an investor for 1.2 hectares out of the 3.6 hectares up for sale within the year.

This may fetch roughly ₱900 million for Belle.

Belle Bay City Corp. (BBCC), a 61-percent owned subsidiary of Belle, used to be part of a consortium that owned 19 hectares of reclaimed land along Roxas Boulevard.

The property was supposed to be developed into a mixed-use complex with hotels and e-centers.

But due to the weakness in the economy and the property sector, shareholders of BBCC decided to dissolve BBCC and divide the property among the shareholders, including Belle.

Ocier also said the company was spending approximately ₱2 to ₱3 billion over the next five years for its residential projects.

Belle is currently developing a residential area called Southern Hills in Tagaytay Highlands.

It is also working on new plans for Flamingo hills, its luxury subdivision on a 56-hectare lot in Tagaytay Highlands in Tanauan, Batangas.

It will also be launching its newest residential project dubbed Lakelands on Taal Lake.

Lakelands is envisioned to be an international and residential community, which will house an 18-hole golf course, a clubhouse and a wellness center that will cater to overseas Filipinos and foreign retirees.

Lakelands will sit on a 325-hectare peninsula facing into Taal Lake.

Belle earlier reported a surge in its net income by 204 percent to ₱731 million in 2003 from ₱239 million in 2004 due to brisk sales of its property development.

Commodities' prices rising

on selected wet-day stores in Cagayan City (January and April 2005)

Commodities	Average prices in pesos		Increase
	Before (January 2005)	Now (End-April 2005)	
Rice	31.80	33.27	1.46
Sardines	10.88	11.99	1.11
Coffee (sachet)	2.41	3.18	0.77
Coffee (20g)	1.64	2.18	0.56
Coffee (30g)	3.23	3.23	0.00
Sugar (wash) 1/4	6.14	6.30	0.16
Sugar (wash) (sachet)	0.18	0.18	0.00
Sugar (white) (1 kl)	3.09	3.64	0.55
Sugar (white) (1/2)	3.45	4.00	0.55
Sugar (white) (1/4)	1.38	1.55	0.18
Detergent	6.36	6.86	0.50
Detergent (1 bar)	3.36	3.86	0.50
Shampoo	4.09	4.82	0.73
Soft drinks	4.73	5.18	0.45
Powdered Milk	12.45	14.09	1.64
Powdered Milk (box)	7.36	7.55	0.19
Soap	2.27	2.82	0.55
Noodles	2.58	2.58	0.00
Condensed Milk	7.91	8.09	0.08

Source: Cagayan City Consumers Price Index (CPI) Survey Team
Ahmad Dacera, Agustina Dacera, Jocelyn Dacera, Reynaldo Dacera, Florida Dacera, Jo Pantaleon D., Regie Ortiz (Capitol Site, QC)
Roberto Cesar Bautista, Jr., Regie Ortiz (Capitol Site, QC)
Nancy Dacera, Lourdes Dacera, Rosalinda Dacera (Capitol Site, QC)
Roberto Cesar, Ronald Dacera, Albert Dacera (Cagayan, CP Extension, QC)

Sari-sari stores bear brunt of oil price, VAT hikes

By Bernardito Sanchez, Ruth Pinches, Angelique Tujio, Mary Rose Bardon and Elaiza Marie Gonzalez
Contributors

ZAMBOANGA CITY—PET OF HER "Kuya Inday's Sari-Sari Store" at Brgy. Upper Tugbungan here, Inday Lopez has seen her profit margin shrink by as much as 50 percent in the last two months.

She said she was forced to raise the prices of her goods by as much as 10 percent to cope with the increase in the value-added tax (VAT) and the rising cost of fuel.

Lopez is not alone. Many sari-sari store owners here, even those in the city proper, have been complaining about the effects of the VAT and the increase in oil prices.

Some have even been forced to close down their stores.

Lopez said she used to earn around ₱1,000 a day from her sari-sari store, but now she can only get around ₱500 a day.

"Our customers have been complaining about the increase in prices of goods. Some have even stopped buying from us," she said.

Lopez said she has also been forced to reduce the number of her employees from three to two.

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CONTROLLING portion sizes for weight loss /C5

LIFESTYLE
Editor Chele Banal-Pormoso

The dawn of a new woman

By Alex Y. Vergara

ACTRESS DAWN ZULUETA IS the picture of a fulfilled woman these days. Not only did she finally realize her wish to become a mother after wanting for seven years, she also seems to be winning her ongoing battle with the bulge.

From a post-pregnancy weight of 155 lb, she's now down to 134—a price 9 lb away from her ideal weight of 125. Because relocation is such an underlying medium, instead by "adding" 18 lb even in the allurement of men, Zulueta needs to trim down further to 125.

"I'm slowly but surely getting there," says Zulueta, clad in a chiffy black jersey dress with a plunging neckline.

Thanks to Marie France, shedding excess pounds seldom seems daunting to entertain even diet pills and fad diets has become doable for women like Zulueta. She has even found a solution to her pesky "saddlebags" that used to bother her most when she was a slim and swinging single.

"I was determined to stay as slim as possible even when I was pregnant," she says. "Unfortunately, a duller began the way I wanted it, so I gained more than the medically acceptable 25 lb."

But every cowgirls pound she gained seemed worth it. Zulueta and husband Anton Lagdameo are now the proud parents of 7-month-old Jacobo, after overcoming prayers and constant visits to the doctor.

It was a difficult pregnancy to say the least, one that required Zulueta, whose immune system seemed to have gone haywire, to take steroids to keep her body from rejecting her own baby.

Apart from coping water retention, the steroids included Dawn's stomach to produce more acid," says Dr. Ariel Torres of Marie France. "That's why you can't take steroids orally on an empty stomach."

The associated side effects, of course, came in the form of bloating, weight gain and an "insatiable" appetite for food, says Zulueta. Apart from ravishing home-cooked fares, her knees began to hurt because of the added weight.

"I'm 37 and I suddenly felt my age," she says with self-deprecating humor. "Even if I managed to look and act like somebody who's 20 years younger, there was no denying the fact that I felt old and wasn't in typical shape."

Despite the precautions, Jacobo arrived two months early. To make matters worse, Zulueta had to deliver him via Caesarean section. "The Caesarean operation prevented her from hitting the gym for at least four months.

Zulueta was dead to meet to Quezon'ten, then decided against it after learning that she might have to undergo another one if and when she got pregnant again. She realized the procedure, as well as bed diets like South Beach, wasn't a long-term solution for overall weight loss.

So, instead of depriving herself of her favorite foods, Zulueta tries to eat sensibly. She also tries to avoid carbohydrates and other calorie-laden fare a few hours before bedtime.

"I was raring to get back in shape and get back to work hard then," she says as she points to her "before" photo taken some two months after giving birth. She insists the lifeless image looked a lot better and dramatic compared to how big she really was.

The picture was taken during the first week of December last year—or round the time Jacobo was expected—while her "after" photo was shot exactly three months later.

Remembering which she did during Jacobo's first month, and waking up in the middle of the night to check on her firstborn did little to stop those unwanted pounds. Then Marie France came into the picture.

"I was a bit depressed since I couldn't do much," Zulueta says, "so when the offer from Marie France came, I thought I had nothing to lose. I gave it a try."

It was then a blessing in disguise, as coincidence decided to step a bit longer in Manila to be reunited to shower. This sidelined Zulueta, who now calls Davao her home, time to undergo daily treatments at Marie France for a full two months.

Following her return to Davao, Zulueta says it is that she spends at least two-hour-of sessions at Marie France whenever she flies every two weeks to Manila to take some for her afternoon soap "Now and Forever."

"A visit usually lasts 20-45 minutes," says Torres. "But if you want to experience a more dramatic weight loss, we recommend longer treatment time, done with more frequency."

A typical session for Zulueta consists of such procedures and steps as Endermologie, Slim Pulse Fat Reducer, Physique Inch-Loss Treatment and Fat Mobilization System. She will be using Marie France's newest treatment, Ultra-Shape.

Zulueta finds the Marie France approach multi-pronged: It promotes weight loss as it reduces inch loss. It also addresses such concerns as bloating, sagging muscles and prevents cellulite buildup. "Which, says Torres, is unpredictable.

"It takes a long time for a person to develop cellulite," he adds, "so naturally it takes quite some time to get rid of it. What we do is direct your fat by force."

Says Pulse, for instance, works via ultrasound waves that penetrate the skin to smash the adipose tissue where fats and cellulite are trapped. It separately liquefies fatty deposits and minimizes the release of toxins from the body.

Endermologie is a complementary treatment that relies on the action of rollers that release deep tissue trapped in fat. By mobilizing fat and unwinding collagen in the fibers, Endermologie eliminates the hard, rippled appearance of cellulite in the arms, thighs, legs, abdomen and buttocks.

Coupled with the right exercise routine, Zulueta is giving her body a few more months to recover before feeling the gym, which Marie France doesn't discourage, the treatments may be a woman's most effective tools in her quest to slim down and manage weight.

"I definitely recommend Marie France to anyone who are considering a similar course," says the actor." Zulueta says. "But I'm definitely not finished yet. I consider myself a work in progress."

DAWN Zulueta (inside her "before" photo taken several months ago): "I'm still a work in progress."

HAIR TRAUMA:
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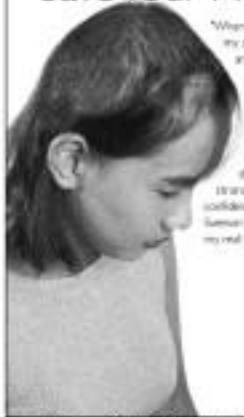

"When I was younger, my mom used a strong medicine on my scalp to treat my hair loss. My hair started to fall off and as time went on, I was losing so much hair that I almost became bald. I got teased so many times that my confidence level dropped tremendously. I tried wearing a wig but it looked so fake and only worsened the insults I was getting. Thankfully, Svenson gave me the best cure to my hair loss. Through their effective line of treatments, my hair started to re-grow faster with thicker strands. As it grew longer, I felt my confidence growing back with no view but Svenson is my answered prayer for restoring my real 'hair!'"

– Jennifer Cabana

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'Immigrants' in Boracay

THE SOUTHERN royals of the Pearl of the Pacific: only daughter Rita, with mother Marilou Tirol S., and our king of the day, Greg Sarmen

IT WAS A SUPER NICE, FUN, unforgettable birthday bash for Rita's super hostess, owner of the fabulous, one of the best, Hotel of the Pacific Resort and fantastic spa, Greg Sarmen. His childhood pals all "migrated" from Iloilo to this exotic island of Boracay for a week of partying, pampering.

Not wanting to miss this once-a-year happening were Greg S.' super-close gang mates from his college days. Pic, members of the group popularly known as The Iloilo Circle, considered how we used to commute between Iloilo and Bacolod for grand parties hosted by the awesome twin Lazaros, sister Mila L. Clemente.

At the time, we would get the bi-weekly fare from Manila like The Hi-Jacks and boogie till wee-past 2 a.m.

For the Greg S. bash, the world's sugar barons and businessmen came in full force, paleontologists—hey, but namedropping like Jose Miguel Arroyo-ha-ha with wife Margie Aranez, Felicia Sarmen and wife Mimet Linsaver. Ed Besamo with wife Josefina Locsin, Quirino and Melinda Roxas, Allen and Lucy Orosa, and Martin Romero Gumboc.

Also with Iloilo Marilou Tirol, Greg's hydrocephalic wife, couldn't wait to sit down for a chat at the Pearl with other Assumption gals like Celing Beldersano Lopez and Josefina Locsin Besares, Lucy Orosa, who went to the US with Marilou S. to promote their master's degrees—Lucy in New York and Marilou L. in Philadelphia.

The fun-and-only daughter, young and brilliant, super-achiever Rita S., jetted in from Manila despite her hectic schedule as the attendant to countless corporate events lined up for the coming months. Read in the favorite venue for such activities. After all, pelangan, the hotel is in an exclusive location and has a scenic and pristine beach front.

The hot band from Iloilo headed by Ronny Jordan rented the place with cash-and-roll notes from the '50s to today's big rounds. For guests, Mike Gaudiel Sirios, commented, "Hey I wasn't born yet at that time." Everyone rolled back, "Same here," followed by roars of laughter.

One of the partying twin sisters asked Ronny E. to sing "To All the Girls I've Loved Before," immediately after the song was performed, his sultry wife stood up and asked Ronny to sing next "Please Release Me," which brought loud applause and whistles mostly from the wives present.

There were also ballroom dancing and karaoke, with Thomas Aldon voted as best singer of the evening. Louie Cruz jokingly intimated that if he did take singing lessons, he should look for a refund.

The hotel chef went all-out in preparing an excellent dinner which included Italian and other international dishes, as well as a couple of yummy local items, pelangan.

The toast here's looking out of the—Greg dies was done to endless applause, after the happy birthday wished him tons of other birthdays like this one. Suffice, before cocktails, the guests and the famous band attended a Thanksgiving Mass at the most unique, beautiful, serene chapel tucked away in the lush forest in the grounds of the Pearl of the Pacific.

Hey, here's to long life, good health and tons of happiness for one king for a day Greg Sarmen.

Cheers, pelangan!

MARISSA Arias and Kenny Jordan

SOUL MATES Sandra Rocco, main man of Boracay's popular Pito Bandero's Resto, and wifey Louie Cruz

OLD-WORLD TWIST Angel Sarmenia Cuting Lopez and dance partner

HOT young movers and achievers Rita Sarmen with pals Agnes and Anna Besares

BUSINESS magnate Alex Orosa and Charlie Opinion

MATCH Sarkies and Carina Cruz

SUPER Futterkisty Besares and Merlie Sarmiento

Tay Tajanglangit and Thomas Adam

Photos by Alex Vitz Hogan using Kodak EasyShare

Converse-ation pieces

Converse addicts from all walks of life—and believe me, pelangan, there are tons of us from the well-heeled fashion show biz and today's hip set—were drawn pargosy-prime pieces from Converse's latest to die for and closed-over Spring/Summer 2006 collections at the elegant Conservatory of the Peninsula Manila Hotel.

A University of the Philippines basketball player and teacher Jenskies Messina, reminiscent college MVP and Ateneo International School basketball coach Erwin Diaz Sandoval, musician, multi-talented spoken-word poet, award-winning TV actress Jean and boyfriend Enzo Arellano, actress Jaret and VJ Maciel Rodriguez, and yours truly, plus tons of the country's most beautiful personalities, tried out the new-yet-catching shoes and latest apparel. The new collection also over the towers of classic designs from Converse, dahlings.

The collection includes the true-American icon Chuck Taylor All-Stars, the athletic shoes that started it all in 1921, and are so popular today as they

WINNERS Margie Go, resident Converse EPP and managing director, don't say enough about the cool Converse duds.

"UNANG HIRIT" Drew Arellano and "Pinay Big Brother 'I' Maricel Rodriguez show their Converse-ing pick.

OUR MAN GGA, workaholic Jimi Ramirez, Converse sales-marketing manager, and host, gracious Jay Egmerano

CONVERSE is the choice of Jenks' drummer Alexis Marcos.

Searching for the best

SUBSTABIL, THE SIMPLEST question about your options for healthy living are not asked, or worse, not answered.

In the course of daily living, lifestyle often demands a way of searching for what's best out there for you.

These answers to some of your questions resulted from research and are given with candor in the hope of providing just a little more enlightenment to the seeker.

Why are some of the most popular diets so high in protein? Are they safe?

There are at least two to three people in this widely accepted by the societ ate. While they may seem effective, many nutritionists question their safety.

Though you will see results within two weeks with a high-protein diet, the overload may cause your kidneys to work overtime, possibly resulting a pain called ketosis, raised level of ketone bodies that are natural products of metabolism. The condition has led to kidney problems in some.

Once low in carbohydrates are probably designed for those who move less. Go, little or no exercise). And because the body's energy comes primarily from carbs, when the body is deprived of them, the easiest tendency is to produce energy from fat. Hence, weight loss. Remember that your brain's food source is glucose that comes mainly from carbs. If you go on high-protein, low-carb diet, you could be starving your brain.

There are so many vitamins in the market. How do I choose what's best for me?

Different people have different vitamin and nutritional needs. If you were something specially designed for your lifestyle and health condition, it is best to consult your doctor. However, if it's a daily vitamin regimen you want, most over-the-counter preparations are good. But since you have no way of comparing the effectiveness or potency of different supplements, follow the "something is better than nothing."

Your chosen supplement may have the following:

Vitamins—A, B complex, C, D, E, K; minerals—calcium, magnesium, chromium, iron, fluorine, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, selenium, zinc.

It is important to read labels. Know what your chosen vitamin contains.

Over and above your daily regimen, you may consider taking an antioxidant supplement containing co-enzyme Q10, alpha-lipoic acid, green tea, gingko biloba, ginseng.

What supplements would you recommend to those with active lifestyles?

Most fitness enthusiasts believe one banana before a workout is enough. It's still need basic supplements of vitamins A, B6, C, calcium, magnesium (which is lost through workout).

Looking for extended energy? Eat high-carb foods, and some are better than others—soybeans better than peas, whole-wheat pasta better than white pasta, beets better than carrots, grapefruit better than oranges, apples or bananas.

What is the most skin-friendly supplement or drug/pill/tablet to take for last today? My body's budget is small. Is there any all-around product I can use for face and body?

Because circulation comes first, perhaps you should start with a basic soap product. Many would opt for baby soap which, ideally would be gentle on the skin. However, the choice of a product would depend on your age and beauty requirements.

It's for whitening and moisturizing, you need oatmeal and rice chemical-based soap like Dil and Herbs that combines the best of pineapple and papaya. It's the new generation of anti-aging, whitening soaps in the market today.

I am hyperactive. What to do best may to counteract my attacks?

A holistic approach to your situation should address your physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Control your salt/sodium intake, exercise (sweat out the toxins), do a body-mind therapy like yoga, tai chi, qigong or rest-recuperating, meditate, see a therapist, explore counseling, write in a journal, walk in the park).

Studies have proven that your emotions are directly connected to your physical body. Therefore, if you control your emotions you can also control your reactions to stress.

Love and light!

Source: "Vitamin Bible for the 21st Century," by Earl Mindell

Workshop on spa management

THE SPA PROFESSIONALS International Development Center (SPID), the first International by recognized spa school in the Philippines, is conducting a workshop on "Professional Spa Management" May 10-11.

The workshop will cover day-to-day operations of a spa: operations, management, human resource issues, financial control, among others.

Spa Professionals is conducting the workshop to help people wanting to go into the spa business to set up facilities that are safe, efficient, profitable and financially viable.

The course also includes workshops on "Understanding the Spa & Wellness Industry" and "How to Set Up a Spa," among others.

"Understanding the Spa and Wellness Industry" is a four-hour course designed to help builders, resort owners, architects, real-estate developers, interior designers, doctors and other individuals interested in the wellness industry have a deeper appreciation of the industry of spa, the relationship between spa and wellness, business opportunities in the wellness industry, trajectories of the industry, among others.

Spa Professionals also offers spa therapy courses including Anatomy and Physiology, Swedish Massage (CERTIC), Aroma and Whirlpool, Include, Aromatherapy, Filipino Hilot and others. Call 8382170, telefax 8382195, e-mail info@spaprofessionals.net or visit www.spapros.blogspot.com. Spa Professionals is on the fourth floor of Greenhills Promenade in San Juan, Metro Manila.

Preventing allergic reactions

HOUSE DUST AND POLLUTION can trigger reactions called allergic rhinitis.

Characterized by sneezing, runny or clogged nose and itchy, watery, red eyes, it is caused by swelling in the nose lining in nasal membranes due to exposure to allergens like house dust, pollen, animal dander, or pollution.

For easy consultation, Giselle Sanchez and actor Boyet Glan, there is only one way to avoid the nuisance: silence of allergic rhinitis. Diphenhydramine HCl (Benadryl Ait) capsule, an antihistamine.

Antihistamine medicines are the first line of defense against allergic rhinitis. They effectively block allergens if not in taking the nasal tissues.

Worst but busy schedules, Sanchez and Glan try to prevent asthma attacks that can slow them down by keeping Benadryl All capsule handy. Each Benadryl All capsule, they are able to control the bothersome symptoms of allergic rhinitis.

If symptoms persist, consult your doctor. Read label directions carefully.

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Photo shows the scars sustained by a patient after an accidental windshield injury (left) and the scar improvement after Contractubex® treatment (right).

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LOVEKNOTE

BY ELIZABETH CHEUNG-LO

TULDOK

BY PAUL AND TATJANA LANSANG

Life-altering encounter with MS

By Anna A. Jardaleza

DR. ANGEL VILLAFUERTE used to be full of zip. She was active in church and community activities, and swam regularly as part of her health regimen.

Only 24 then, she had a budding career in dentistry. Then, one day, her lower right leg went numb.

The sensation came and went until it crawled up to her waist. A medical diagnosis found she had multiple sclerosis (MS). Almost immediately the life she knew was gone.

Now 41, and wheelchair-bound, Villafuerte lives with the horrors of MS. She talks of ambivalent days marred by her suddenly going blind while making her way down a flight of stairs, counting her to-dos. Of the time she locked herself up in her house for a year and, when she finally gathered the courage to step out with a cane on each hand, children stopped in her awkward gait. Or—very worse—of how adults unconsciously hoisted her down just to see her full to the ground.

Undiagnosed

And Villafuerte is not alone in her ordeal. At Dr. St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMFC) in Quezon City, an average of 15 patients are diagnosed with MS each year. An even greater number of cases probably remain undiagnosed.

Worldwide, about 2.5 million people suffer from MS, with women twice more likely than men to be afflicted.

MS is defined as a potentially debilitating chronic disease affecting the central nervous system (CNS). Its early symptoms are experienced between ages 20 and 40. The CNS consists of the brain and spinal cord.

MS is an auto-immune disease, meaning the body's own immune system attacks the body like it is a foreign substance. The body responds by releasing antibodies and white blood cells against the proteins in the myelin sheath in the brain and spinal cord. This action causes inflammation and injury to the sheath and the nerves. The damage hinders or slows nerve signals.

Sclerosis is from the Latin word meaning "scar." In the case of MS, multiple scars or plaques are found in the brain or spinal column. Depending on severity and where the plaques are located in the brain and spinal column, MS can affect vision, memory, muscle speech, balance, hearing. Worst many MS patients lose muscle coordination, strength, vision and sensation.

Symptoms include dizziness, fatigue, double or blurring of vision, numbness or weakness in one or more limbs, usually on one side or at the lower half of the body, tingling or painful sensations in numb areas, electric-shock sensations during head movements. The symptoms are seemingly minor and ignored as just the result of everyday stress.

"Those are neurological symptoms (that) people tend to dismiss them. (Many) doctors treat these symptomatically but never really get the diagnosis," said Dr. Luis Abola, medical director of Schering Philippine Corp.

MS varies in severity. Dr. Hans Ludwig F. Dantes, neurologist at the Institute of Neurosciences at the SLMC, said 10 percent of cases do not go beyond the mild state. For other patients, however, MS can result in permanent disability. They may develop paralysis, difficulty to concentrate, forgetfulness, slurred speech, muscle stiffness or spasticity, bladder and bowel movement problems.

Unfortunately, the causes of MS are still not known. Although it is not strictly hereditary, a person has a 3 percent chance of acquiring the disease if a parent is affected. Geographical factors may also affect incidence. The disease is more prevalent in temperate climates, and in areas farther away from the equator.

No cure

So far, there is no cure for MS. Damage caused by MS is irreversible and no drug has been found to prevent permanent disability. Treatments, such as the administration beneath the skin of interferon beta 1b (Betaferon), can relieve symptoms or modify the course of the disease by decreasing the frequency and severity of relapses, and slowing down its progression. But the treatment is for life.

"Interferon beta 1b is like a cell nurse, unlike other drugs that affect the targeted cells only for a 10-year study, 350,000 have benefited from this treatment," says James Alexander, Schering regional product manager for Asia Pacific.

It was best to start treatment early. Alexander said, as damage occurred even at the earliest stage of the disease, may before permanent symptoms of disabilities appeared. Abola said the clinical trials of interferon beta 1b had yielded definite benefits; significantly reducing by up to 30 percent MS symptoms and delaying the onset of the disease by almost one year, improving the patients' quality of life.

"The interferon beta 1b is so reputedly the only drug that treats the actual disease, not just the symptoms.

Alexander added that safety and drug tolerability of interferon beta 1b was 90 percent. "It is very safe with no serious side effects in the first two years. In fact, the longer you take it the better the drugs take effect." He also symptoms may occur during the first three months of treatment.

Villafuerte was diagnosed in November 1999 with a very progressive MS, a condition that will cause progressive disability within 10 years of an initial diagnosis. She was already bedridden when she took interferon beta 1b. After using the drug, however, she said she was able to spend Christmas not on a wheelchair, something she thought she would still be able to do. Today, she's also re-started yoga.

"The physical wears that comes with MS is terrifying, but I can't cause so fight for my family," she said.

Schering launched recently Compassion (tel. (632) 8337267), a 24-hour counseling through home visit or by phone for MS patients struggling with emotional trauma. It also provides referrals to support groups and community agencies, and provides education of treatments.

E-mail the author at ajardaleza@inquirer.com.ph

NEUROLOGIST Dr. Luis Dantes, Schering regional product manager for Asia-Pacific James Alexander, Schering Philippine medical director Lois Abola

DR. ANGEL Villafuerte with husband Joseph

Practical tips to control portion sizes

DID YOU KNOW THAT CONSUMING AS FEW as 100 extra calories per day—the amount in 30 delicious bite-sized Bonde bites—can lead to a 10-pound weight gain in a year? This is why nutritionist Catherine Bonde says learning to control portion sizes is crucial to lifelong weight management.

"Essentially, she says, is that absolutely everything calories and measuring your food before you eat is not healthy. In her article, "Less is More," in the idea Health & Fitness Source Magazine, she gives practical tips which you can use while eating at home, eating out and snacking.

Home cooking

- Eating breakfast helps control your appetite. Studies show breakfast eaters consume fewer calories throughout the day.
- Start meals with three-inch fruits or vegetables so you are not so hungry for higher-calorie food.
- Bonde recommends taking the time to measure a teaspoon or tablespoon of oil to see what it looks like in the pan. That way, in the future, you will not be pouring too much.
- Bonde says serving foods family-style in the middle of the table makes it too easy to take second and third helpings. Try putting the serving bowls in the kitchen or on a side table a distance away from the dining table.
- To visualize what portions of your plate should look like, Bonde suggests using

WELL AND GOOD

Vivien Javier

the "plate model" method. One half of the plate should be filled with vegetables, one-quarter with grains (like rice) and the remaining one-quarter with meat, fish, eggs, tofu or legumes (like mongo). Add a fruit or the side and you are good to go.

- Bonde calls eating smaller plates a psychologically powerful way to decrease portion sizes without feeling deprived.

Eating out

The following tips apply to both fast food and sit-down and fine-dining establishments.

- Start each meal with a big glass of water. Request for soft drinks without the meal, says Bonde, because water fills you up without adding any calories, plus it's free.
- If you know you'll be having steak for dinner, says Bonde, choose light fare for lunch—for example, a turkey sandwich with lettuce, tomato and mustard and a fruit for dessert. In our Filipino serving, this would be similar to having chicken Inasal for lunch because you are going to have crispy pata for dinner.
- Take the time to ask how selections from the menu are prepared, suggests Bonde. You can also make a special request for a low-calorie meal. For example, ask that steamed vegetables replace a side order of baked potato.
- In fine-food restaurants, Bonde warns that, although the biggest portions appear to give you the best value, resist and opt for the smallest burger or the plate grilled chicken entrée and salad.
- When in doubt, order simple dishes. Fancy foods contain more calories than foods that are simply baked or grilled.
- Order salad dressing and sauces on the side to control the amount of fat you consume.
- Bonde reminds us that like all fried foods, French fries contain excessive amounts of fat. She says if you must indulge yourself, order the smallest size.
- If you absolutely must have dessert, go for it, Bonde says, but resist only your meal with a salad and fruit cocktail. She also suggests skipping the appetizers and bread and butter, so if you've got your heart set on having a large entrée.
- If the portions are big, share an order or take half home. When your meal arrives, ask for a takeout box immediately, says Bonde. Put away half your meal before you even start.

Snacking

Bonde says many people believe they should avoid snacking when they are watching their food intake. Actually, she explains, a healthy snack once or twice a day between meals can help stave off hunger and prevent you from binging. Once again, she points out that the key is to choose the right snack and then eat it in moderation.

- Snacking on fruits and vegetables is an easy way to eat your nutrients free-a-day requirements.
- When eating your snack, do just that—eat. Bonde explains that watching television or reading a book while you eat leads to mindless munching and excess calories. Diet experts say you don't even feel satisfied because your mind is not concentrating on the flavor and texture of the food.

I agree with Bonde that when you indulge it treats, enjoy each and every bite. Stop feeling guilty because you are eating supposedly "bad" food. One points out that eating low-fat chocolate cookies is often smart-ofying, even if you eat like whole bar. Choose smaller quantities of the real thing and savor the flavor. Amen to that!

- Bonde warns that buying chips and cookies in bulk usually means saving them in equally bulky portion sizes. If you love to bulk to save money, divide that chips or cookies into small plastic containers and store them away for future use. Just don't do this when you are hungry.
- Bonde says nuts are rich in fiber and protein and are a superior alternative to chips. It's true that they are high in fat but a handful of nuts can go a long way in satisfying a feeling of fullness. She says you just have to remember to keep each portion to 1 or 2 ounces (about 10-20 nuts).

Visit www.sixpackfitness.info

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

The tree

THIS YOGA-INSPIRED exercise strengthens the legs and improves balance.

Equipment:
None

Exercise technique:

1. Stand with your feet together. Wiggle your toes to spread them apart so you get a better grip on the floor with your feet.
2. Bend your right knee and place the sole of your right foot on the inner thigh of your left leg.
3. Place your palms together in the middle of your chest then lift your arms overhead.
4. Hold the position for the desired length of time.
5. Repeat on the other side.

Performance tips:

1. Avoid pushing the sole of the foot into the inner thigh because this will throw your hips and spine out of alignment. Instead pull up tall so that the top of your hipbones is level.
2. If keeping your palms together overhead bothers your shoulders, keep your arms at chest level or keep your arms apart overhead.
3. If you have never done this exercise, here are several ways to modify it going from easier to harder:
   - Place the ball of your right foot on the floor beside your left heel, arms at chest level.
   - Lift the right foot a few inches off the floor and hold it there, arms at chest level.
   - Lift the right knee in front of you as many times, arms at chest level or overhead.
   - Inhale and exhale through your nose. Breathe deeply and deeply.

Repetitions:

One breath equals an inhalation and an exhalation. Do three to five breaths per side.

THE TIMEKEEPER (Skinwear, Thermometer, Barometer) can track the current, highest and accumulated altitude; predict climate conditions for the next four to six hours; measure barometric pressure and current temperature. It can even display information in graphic form. The smart-ally Timer features are set in bright nightlights, chronograph, countdown timer and five sets of alarms.

THE JET Digital sport watch, from the CRS Series, and the Pride Digital sport watch are both water-resistant and can keep track of time in two time zones. Both also have countdown timers, have large display, chronographs with lap timers, and amplified alarms.

SPEEDO'S Reach Professional Trio watch has a tide indicator that tells you the exact time on the beach of your choice, plus dual time, chronograph, alarm, countdown timer, and 12-hour or 24-hour display with stainless, seconds, month, date and day.

Speeding up time

THE LATEST PIECES from America's No. 1 sports watch, Timex, and the top seven sports brand, Speedo, pursuit watches that can keep up with your activities this summer.

Speedo's Reflex watch is high sporty fashion and comes in the fashion colors of the season, with an aluminum bezel, a 1/100 chronograph, amplified alarm, compliments to the day of the month/time, and your choice of a 12- or 24-hour format.

The Ladies' Swim analogue watch has premium diamond cut hands and stainless steel bezel that complements its streamline design, plus it is water resistant (up to 50m).

For those who engage in sports, there is Timex Ingenium Men's Strap, which not only gives you the compass once but also keeps track of the tides.

Then for the serious water lovers, Timex has the Surf Time Zone style watch and the Expedition Women's style watch. Both have a unique underwater backlight—nightlight activation, glow-in-the-dark hands and 100-meter water resistance. Surf Time has a second tide. They are also shock-resistant up to 200 Gs.

Timex is available at Timex stores and Speedo specialty stores and authorized dealers. Both watch brands are available at all Watch Republic outlets.

In defense of 'The Da Vinci Code'

DAN BROWN'S HUGELY SUCCESSFUL and controversial novel, "The Da Vinci Code" (All million copies sold), has received a lot of flak lately, mainly from the conservative Catholic church and her apologists.

There believe (falsely, of course) that the book undermines Christianity and may lead many to the faithful.

According to one critic, a historian named James Hitchcock (as quoted in the book "The Da Vinci Hoax," by Oken and Morell):

"'The Da Vinci Code' can be viewed as an ecclesiastical antiheat of popular culture, for its immense sales ensure that it will have influence on people who never read serious books. Brown has found a formula for becoming rich, sex, sensationalism, feminism, anti-Catholicism and the occult. But it is also dramatically the unseverely hostile Christianity and casts himself as engaged in an anti-crusade. The culture is ripe for such a debased book, so that, even performing Christians are being seduced by it."

What is obvious to me in the above quotation is not that Brown "unseverely hates Christianity" but that Hitchcock is biased in his opinions, which is not expected of scholarship.

What really irks blind followers of Christianity and its Medieval-thinking Jewishness about the novel is clearly stated in "The Da Vinci Hoax":

"'The Da Vinci Code' challenges beliefs that are sensitive Christianity: the celibacy and chivalry of Jesus, the place of the apostles and the purpose of the Church. The novel insists that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had children, that Mary Magdalene—not Peter—was the head apostle, that Catholic Church has kept these 'facts' hidden long enough here and there, and that Jesus was not God's Son—that but merely a good man 'deified' by Emperor Constantine in AD 325."

Facts

The fact is (Brown's book is fiction. He himself says so. The only things Brown claims to be factual in his book, in his own self-assessment before the story begins, are the following:

- "The Priory of Sion, a European secret society founded in 1099
- "The Opus Dei, a deeply devout Catholic sect that has just completed construction of a $3D-D" million sectional headquarters at 243 Lexington Ave., New York
- "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals"

Yet one of the vociferous critics of the book published in the local press even mentioned what (brown himself said about his unconscious and his work. So, for a change, let's hear from the author himself.

In an interview that appeared in Publishers Magazine (Vol. 3, No. 1) published by Bodhi Tree Bookstore in Los Angeles, Brown answers the following questions:

Q and A

What made you decide to tackle a controversial subject?

"Strangely I don't think I ever actively 'decided' to tackle a controversial topic. I chose this topic for personal reasons—primarily as an exploration of my own faith and my own ideas about religion. I believe that one of the reasons the book has become controversial is that religion is a very hard thing to discuss in quantitative terms. I consider myself a student of many religions. The more I learn, the more questions I have. Deciding to write about this topic was simply part of my own personal exercise in understanding."

How did you get all the inside information for this book?

"Most of the information is not 'inside' as it seems. The secret described in the novel has been chronicled for centuries, so there are thousands of answers to those points. To solutions, I was surprised how much I knew here went to share their expertise with me. One academic told me her enthusiasm for 'The Da Vinci Code' was based in part on her hope that this ancient mystery would be unveiled in a visible audience."

Has anyone in organized religious come out in support of your novel?

"Yes, many people in organized religious have come out in support of this novel and, of course, many have come out in opposition as well.

"The opposition generally comes from the strictest Christian thinkers who feel the idea of married Jesus serves to undermine his divinity. While I don't agree with this interpretation, this is considered because the church sees itself as a deeply empowering and positive force for everyone involved.

"Suddenly, enormous numbers of people are passionately debating important philosophical topics and, regardless of the personal conclusions that each of us draws, the debate can only help to strengthen our understanding of our own faith.

"Much of the positive response I get from within organized religion comes from many [who write to thank me for pointing out that they have sacrificed their entire lives to the Church and are still considered 'unfit' to serve behind the altar].

"I have also heard from hundreds of enthusiastic priests. While many of them disagree with some of the ideas in the novel, they are thrilled that their parishioners are eager to discuss religion.

"Fr. John Sewell of St. John's Episcopal Church in Memphis stated it particularly eloquently in this press, saying, 'The Internet is not a threat. This is an opportunity. We are called to creatively engage the culture—and that is what I want to do. I think [the Brown has done me a favor (let's leaving me talk about things that matter]."

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime V. Ongpin

Golf tournament set May 3-6

A BRAND-NEW TOURNAMENT AMELIA fun day four-night luxury cruise to Baja Mexico for non-members of Royal Cruises, set up for golfers in the 2006 Belle Cup Golf Tournament, May 3-6.

Cruise winners will be flown to Los Angeles via Philippine Airlines.

Now on its seventh year, the metro-host tournament, which will be held at the Tagaytay Highlands and Midlands golf courses, is set to be Belle Corp.'s grandest golf event of the year with some 288 players competing for the various prizes.

Players who score zero are any of the designated holes can select Club Car golf cars, a Northwest Airlines Pistol Business Class ticket to any destination in the United States, or a Rado Sintra Swiss Watch.

Capping the four-day event is a cocktail dinner awards' dinner, with the eatery, dance beauties and presentation ensemble, at the Highlands Multipurpose Hall, at 5:30 p.m., May 6.

Event sponsors include Belle Corp., Toyota Motors Phils., Highlands Prime Inc., SM Prime Inc., Philippine Air lines, Northwest Airlines, Samsung, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp., Bel Company, Yamaha Golf Cars, Bacha, GSI, Corp., AVON Magic Sing, Wordenberg, and IPL, official licensee/distributor of the Belle Cup Golf Tournament.

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How does it work? Simple. PSBank Home Loans Thank Goodness the Five days (TGIF) challenge is open to all individual clients* nationwide who avail any of the following PSBank Home Loan products: Home Buyer Protect, Home Construction Loan and Home Credit Line. Maximum loan value of the home loan application for Home Buyer Protect and Home Construction Loan is P 10,000,000, while Home Credit Line is P5,000,000. The home loan application must have an approved credit decision. Disapproved home loan applications are automatically disqualified. An approved credit decision is when PSBank approves the client's home loan application at an amount equal to or less than what was applied for.

The client needs to submit a completely filled up home loan application form together with the complete required documents at any PSBank branch from April 24, 2006 to June 30, 2006. The client will then receive a TG-I-F-Bank Home Loan TGIF 5-day Challenge Voucher signifying submission of complete requirements. It will also contain information regarding when the application was submitted, the start and end dates of the challenge. The 5-day deadline will start immediately the next banking day after PSBank accepts the complete requirements.

Clients must have a cell phone number where PSBank can send SMS updates on his home loan application. PSBank will notify the client once a credit decision has been reached on his home loan application via SMS.

The challenge ends when PSBank provides its first credit decision on the client's home loan application. The first credit decision should not be later than 15 banking days after submission of documents. If the first credit decision is an approved decision and took more than 5 banking days after submission of application, the client will get a 1% discount on his first year's home loan interest rate.

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T.G.I.F.

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Offer runs from April 24, 2006 up to June 30, 2006. See flyers for details.

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